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AN  
ILLUSTRATION  
OF THE  
DOCTRINES  
OF  
THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION,  
WITH RESPECT TO  
FAITH AND PRACTICE.  
UPON THE PLAN OF  
THE ASSEMBLY'S SHORTER CATECHISM,  
*Comprehending a complete Body of Divinity.*

---

By the late Rev. and Learned  
MR. THOMAS BOSTON,  
*Minister of the Gospel at Ettrick; Author of the Fourfold State,  
A View of the Covenants, &c.*

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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Hold fast the form of sound words.—2 Tim. i. 13.

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AN  
ILLUSTRATION  
OF THE  
DOCTRINES  
OF THE  
*CHRISTIAN RELIGION.*

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OF THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT, CONTINUED.

*Secondly,* **I** COME to shew the duties more peculiar to each party.

1. The duties of the husband of this sort may be reduced to this one, viz. that he carry himself towards her as a head for her good, ruling her in the fear of the Lord. It is not a name of power only, but of duty; for he must be such a head to her as Christ is to the church, Eph. v. 23. And whoso reckon upon the authority of that name without eyeing the duty of it, put asunder what God has joined in his grant, and will join when he calls men to an account.

2. The duties of the wife may be reduced to this one, viz. submitting herself to her husband as her head, Eph. v. 22, 23. She is not to lord it over him, but to be subject to him. And in this respect there is a reverence and fear of the husband enjoined the wife, Eph. v. 33. 1 Pet iii. 2. which is a due regard in the heart to his character as a husband, seeing in that God has put of his own name upon him, God himself being called our husband; a fear to offend him, flowing from love, venting itself in speaking and carrying respectfully to him, 1 Pet. iii. 6.

Now, the husband as the head of the wife owes her,

1. Protection, so as she may be as safe and easy under the covert of his relation to her as he can make her. For this cause God has given the husband as a head to the weaker vessel; and therefore it was an ancient ceremony in marriage for the husband to spread his skirt over his wife, Ruth. iii. 9. He is to protect her to the utmost of his power from the in-

juries of others, 1 Sam. xxx. 18. and particularly from the insults, whether of children or servants in the family, as well as neighbours, Gen. xvi. 6. And if so, surely he himself is not to bear hard upon her, but to shew her a peculiar tenderness as the weaker vessel, a tenderness to her body and spirit too; and not to suffer her, far less to oblige her, to distress herself above measure.

On the other hand, she owes him obedience, a submission to, and compliance with, his admonitions. It is observed of Job's wife, for as ill as she was, when he calls her a fool, she does not give him the same epithet again. Reason itself teaches, that whoso puts himself under the protection of another, must be ruled by that other, and not by himself.

2. Provision, 1 Tim. v. 8. The husband ought to provide for his wife, and cheerfully furnish her with what is needful and convenient, according to his station and ability; and lay out himself by all lawful means for her comfortable through-bearing. And this he should have an eye to, not only for the time of his life, but even after his decease.

And, on the other hand, the wife ought to be helpful to her husband by her frugal management, Prov. xxxi. 27. And God's word and frequent experiments plainly shew, that a man's thriving or not thriving has a great dependence on his wife's management, Prov. xiv. 1. While he, then, is busy without doors, she should be careful within; and therefore it is recommended to women to be much at home, Tit. ii. 5. Yet she may well go abroad when her business calls her, as Abigail did, 1 Sam. xxv.

3. *Lastly*, Direction, with calmness instructing her, how she should carry in every thing, both with respect to things of this life and of the other, Prov. ii. 17. He ought to be as eyes to her, which have their place in the head, and so should be capable to guide, 1 Pet. iii. 7.

On the other hand, the wife should be pliable and teachable, 1 Tim. ii. 11. yea, and be ready to seek instruction from her husband, 1 Cor. xiv. 35. She should be obedient to his commands and directions, ver. 34. for in every thing wherein the law of God has not bound her up, the husband's will ought to be complied with, Eph. v. 24. Gen. iii. 16.

The reasons of the husband's duty are these.

1. Because husbands are appointed to be such heads as

Christ is to the church, Eph. v. 25. And if men would reflect on this, it would make them very dutiful, and bear with many things as Christ doth, else we would be ruined.

2. Because thy wife is thy own flesh, thy second self, ver. 28, 29 ; and so undutifulness is monstrous.

3. Because she is the weaker vessel, 1 Pet. iii. 7; for it hath pleased the Lord to exercise the woman with a special measure of infirmity, both natural and moral.

The reasons of the woman's duty are these.

1. Because the woman was created for the man, 1 Tim. ii. 13. compare 1 Cor. xi. 9.

2. Because the woman was the first that sinned, 1 Tim. ii. 14. compare Gen. iii. 16.

3. Because she is the weaker vessel.

*Use* 1. Let all such as have been, or are in that relation, be humbled under a sense of their sin in that point, and fly to the blood of Christ for pardon. And let every one look on that relation as a serious matter, in which people must walk with God, and under which they are bound to so many duties, of which they must give an account to the Lord.

Let husbands and wives study to make conscience of their duty one to another, and frame their life accordingly. For motives, consider,

(1.) God lays them on. Nature may storm at them, but they are God's commands; and whoso breaketh over the hedge, the serpent will bite.

(2.) Your marriage-vows and voluntary covenant engage to these. Though we forget them, God does not, and will not.

(3.) Your own comfort depends upon them; and so does the happiness in that relation.

*Lastly*, Death comes, and that will dissolve the relation. Therefore, before that awful event, let every one make conscience of performing their respective duties, that they may die in peace.

As to the relation betwixt parents and children, see Col. iii. 20, 21. 'Children obey your parents in all things; for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.'

In the first of these, we have, 1. The duty that children owe to their parents; and that is obedience in all things lawful. The word rendered *obey*, points at obedience flowing



from inward respect to them, 2. The reason of it; it is pleasing to God, who has enjoined it.

In the next place, we have the duty of parents to their children. Where, 1. There is something supposed, that they must use their parental power and authority over their children for their good. 2. Something expressed, that they use it moderately, not abuse it to the irritating of them, lest they crush them, and make them heartless.

Parents and children must carry to one another as they will be answerable to God who has given them their orders. Here I shall shew,

1. The duties that children owe to their parents.
2. The duty of parents to their children.

*First*, I am to shew the duties which children owe to their parents.

1. Singular love to them as the parents ought to bear to them. This is called natural affection, the want whereof is accounted among the most horrid abominations, Rom. i. 31. Such a natural affection did Joseph shew to his father, Gen. xlv. 29. when 'he went to meet him, fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while.'

2. Reverence and fear. Their fear is to be squared with love, and their love salted with fear, Lev. xix 3. The mother is there particularly mentioned; and that, in the first place, because, as people are ready to break over the hedge where it is lowest, so children are most apt to despise their mother; and they being much about her hand while young, lest familiarity breed contempt, God hath expressly provided against it. They must have a conscientious regard to that authority God has given them over them, and fear to offend them, as those who to them are in God's stead.

3. An outward reverent and respectful behaviour towards them. They ought not to be treated rudely by their children, as if they were their companions, Mal. i. 6; but they ought to speak respectfully to them, Gen. xxxi. 35; and carry respectfully to them, Prov. xxxi. 28. This was Solomon's practice, even when a king, 1 Kings ii. 19; for as the candle, if lighted, will shine through the lantern, so reverence in the heart will appear in the outward carriage.

4. A ready obedience to their lawful commands, Col. iii. 20. If it be not contrary to the command of God, they

ought to obey. Subjection and obedience to parents is the honour as well as the duty of children. Joseph's ready obedience to his father is recorded to his commendation, Gen. xxxvii. 13. Yea, Christ himself was a pattern to children in this regard to the parental authority, Luke ii. 51.

5. Submission. They are to submit to their instructions and directions, readily receiving them, and complying with them, Prov. i. 8. Man being born like a wild ass's colt, has need to be taught. They are to submit to their reproofs and admonitions, to take them kindly, and amend what is amiss, Prov. xiii. 1. Yea, they are to submit to their corrections, for the folly bound up in their hearts makes the rod necessary, Heb. xii. 9. They are children of Belial, indeed, that will not bear this yoke of subjection.

6. Bearing with their infirmities, and covering them with the wings of love. Whether they be natural or moral infirmities, they would beware of despising or insulting them on that account, or any way exposing them, as some foolish youngsters are apt to do, Prov. xxiii. 22. Gen. ix. 22.

7. Following their reasonable advice, and taking alongst with them the authority of their parents, in order to their calling or marriage. That children ought not to dispose of themselves in marriage without the consent of parents, is the constant doctrine of the Protestant churches. And the reasons are these. (1.) The scripture gives the power of making marriages for children to the parents, Deut. vii. 3. Jer. xxix. 6. 1 Cor. vii. 37, 38. Yea, even after parties have consented, it is left to the parent, whether to give his abused daughter to him that has been guilty with her, Exod. xxii. 16, 17. (2.) The most approved examples of marriage in scripture go this way, Gen. xxiv. 3, 4. xxviii. 1, 2. and xxix. 19. Judg. xiv. 2. *Lastly*, The reason is plain; for the child cannot give away any thing, that is his parents against their will. Now, the child himself is the parents, a part of their self-moving substance, in which they have a most undoubted property. So, when the devil was permitted to fall upon what was Job's, he fell upon his children, and killed them in the first place. Yet, upon the other hand, no parent can force a child to marry such and such a person; for consent makes marriage, and that which is forced is no consent. The child must be satisfied as well as the parent, Gen. xxiv. 57. So the short of it is, that the

consent of both is necessary, and that the parent must neither force the child, nor the child rob the parent.

8. Readiness to requite their parents when they are in need of it; that as they did for them when young, so they must do for them when old, or reduced to poverty. This God requires of children, 1 Tim. v. 4. It is a piece of that honour to parents which the fifth command enjoins, Matt. xv. 4, 5, 6. So did Joseph, Gen. xlvii. 12. This was a piece of duty which the Lord performed to his mother while he hung on the cross, John xix. 27.

9. *Lastly*, In a word, children should so live as they may be an honour to their parents; for according as they are, their parents are either credited or ashamed. Yea, and when they are dead and gone, they should be reverently remembered, their wholesome advices religiously followed, and their debts satisfied, so as no body may get occasion to reproach them when they are away.

*Use 1.* This may serve for conviction and humiliation to us all, who either have had parents since we came to the years of discretion, or yet have them. Who can say in this, I have made my heart clean:

2. I exhort such as have parents, whether one or more, to be dutiful to them, according to the word. There is indeed a great difference betwixt children in their father's family, and those forisfamiliaried, who, by tacit or express consent, are left to their own disposal; but the duty of filial affection, reverence, and gratitude, abideth. For motives, consider,

(1.) That parents with respect to their children, do in an especial manner bear an image of God, as he is our Creator, Provisor, and Ruler. So are parents those from whom, under him, we had our being, by whose care and government God provided for us, when we could neither provide for nor rule ourselves.

(2.) Hence it is evident, that do what we can to them, or for them, we can never make a full recompence, but, after all, must die in their debt. But how little is this considered by many, who look on what they do for their parents in a magnifying glass, while they are blind to what their parents have done for them!

(3.) *Lastly*, Consider, that God takes special notice how ye carry to your parents, Col. iii. 20. It is a piece of duty



which God readily regardeth according to his promise; and the neglect thereof useth not to be overlooked, but as it disposeth to an ill life otherwise, so God readily pays it home, so as the sin may be read in the punishment.

*Secondly*, I come to consider the duty of parents to their children; and I may take up this under five heads, viz. while they are yet in the womb, while in their infancy, from the time they come to the use of reason, at all times, and when a-dying.

1. The duty which parents owe to their children while yet in the womb.

*1st*, Parents are obliged to use all care for the preservation of the child, to beware of any thing that may harm the child in the belly, and especially that may procure abortion, Judg. xiii. 4.

*2dly*, Dealing with God in behalf of the child, praying for its preservation, and for its soul, as soon as it is known to be a living soul. I think that no sooner should the mother or father know a living soul to be in the womb, but as soon with Rebekah, they should go to God for it, Gen. xxv. 21, 22. If Hannah could devote her child to God before it was conceived, 1 Sam. i. 11. Christian parents may and ought to devote their children to God when quickened in the womb. Whoso neglect this, consider not that then the child is a sinful creature, under the wrath of God, and the curse of the law; that it is capable of sanctification, must live for ever in heaven or hell, and that possibly it may never see the light.

*Lastly*, Labouring by all means that it may be born within the covenant; which is to be done by parents making sure their own being within the covenant; for so runs the promise, 'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed.'

2. The duty they owe to them in their infancy.

*1st*, Parents should bless God for them when they are born, Luke i. 67. &c. Children are God's heritage; the key of the womb is in his hand; he gives them to some, and withholds them from others; and they should be received with thankfulness from the Lord's hand.

*2dly*, Giving them up to the Lord as soon as they are born, renewing the dedication of them to God, and accepting of the covenant for them; and procuring to them the seal of the covenant without any unnecessary delay. Under

the Old Testament, infants were to receive the seal on the eighth day. Now there is no set time, but common equity bids take the first opportunity, and not delay it needlessly. The undue delay of circumcision was punished in Moses, Exod. iv. 24; and the delay of baptism cannot but be displeasing to God too, as a slighting of his ordinance.

*3dly*, Tender care of them, doing all things necessary for them, while they are not capable to do for themselves, Isa. xlix. 15. And here it is the duty of the mother to nurse the child herself, if she be able, Hos. ix. 14. And this care of infants, the burden of which lies most on the mothers is one great piece of their generation-work, wherein they are useful for God, and which they ought to look on as special service for their comfort in the trouble which therein they have.

3. The duties they owe to them from the time they come to the use of reason, and so forward.

*1st*. They are to provide for them, and that aye and until they be in a capacity to provide for themselves, 1 Tim. v. 8. This arises from the natural obligation and instinct that is common to men with beasts whereof the wildest will feed their young till they be able to do for themselves. Thus parents are, (1.) To provide suitable maintenance for their children for the present, and to lay out themselves for it, though with the sweat of their brows. (2.) And, as God prospers them, they are to lay up something for them, 2 Cor. xii. 14: for though the possession be their parent's entirely, yet he is stinted to the use of a part according to what is necessary. Only no man is to take from present necessities for future provisions; but what God has given: let men take the comfortable use of it; and what remains, let them lay by for their children, Eccl. ii. 18, 19, 24. But for people to deny themselves things necessary and comely, that they may lay them up for their children, is a curse; and if their children should follow their example, to deny themselves the use thereof, to transmit them to theirs, the use of it should never be had: but ordinarily what the parents narrowly gather, and keep so as they cannot take the convenient use of it themselves, the children quickly run through.

*2dly*, Civil education, that they may be useful members of the commonwealth. This we may take up in these three things.

(1.) Parents should polish the rude natures of their children with good manners, so as they may carry comely and discreetly before themselves or others, Prov. xxxi. 28. It is the dishonour of parents to see children rude and altogether unpolished as young beasts; and religion is an enemy to rudeness and ill manners, 1 Pet. iii. 8.

(1.) They should give them learning according to their ability, and see that at least they be taught to read the Bible, 2 Tim. iii. 15. What is it that makes so many ignorant old people, but that their parents have neglected this? But where parents have neglected this, grace and good nature would make a shift to supply this defect.

(3.) They should train them up to do something in the way of some honest employment, whereby they may be useful to themselves or others. To nourish children in idleness is but to prepare them for prisons or correction-houses, or to be plagues to some one family or another, if Providence do not mercifully interpose, Prov. xxxi. 27. Christians should train up their daughters to do virtuously, ver. 29. For their own sakes, let them be capable to make their hands sufficient for them, seeing none knows what straits they may be brought to. And for the sake of others to whom he may be joined, let them be virtuously, frugally, and actively educated, otherwise what they bring with them will hardly quit the cost of the mischief that their unthriftiness and silliness will produce, Prov. xiv. 3. Whether ye can give them something or nothing, let them not want Ruth's portion, a good name, a good head, and good hands, Ruth. iii. 11. Sons should be brought up to some honest employment, whereby they may be worth their room in the world, Gen. iv. 2. This is such a necessary piece of parents duty to their children, that the Athenians had a law, That if a son was brought up to no calling at all, in case his father should come to poverty, he was not bound to maintain him, as otherwise he was.

*3dly*, Religious education, Eph. vi. 4. If parents provide not for their children, they are worse than beasts to their young; if they give them not civil education, they are worse than heathens; but if they add not religious education, what do they more than civilised heathens? When God gives thee a child, he says, as Pharaoh's daughter to Moses' mother, 'Take this child and nurse it for me.' Exod. ii. 9. Though



we be but fathers of their flesh, we must be careful of their souls, otherwise we ruin them.

(1.) Parents ought to instruct their children in the principles of religion, and to sow the seeds of godliness in their hearts, as soon as they are able to speak, and have the use of reason, Deut. vi. 6, 7. Such early religious education is a blessed mean of grace, 1 Kings xviii. 12. compare ver. 3. Not only is this the duty of fathers, who should teach their children. Prov. iv. 3, 4. but of mothers, who, while the children are young about their hand, should be dropping something to them for their souls good. Solomon had not only his father's lesson, but the prophecy his mother taught him, Prov. xxxi. 1. See chap. i. 8.

(2.) They should labour for that end to acquaint them with the scriptures, 2 Tim. iii. 15. to cause them to read them. Let the reading of their chapters be a piece of their daily task; and cause them read the scriptures in order, that they may be acquainted both with the precepts and histories of the Bible. Let them be obliged to learn their Catechism, and catechise them yourselves, according to your ability, For teaching by way of question and answer is most easy for them.

(3.) If they ask you any questions concerning these things do not discourage them, but take pains to answer all their questions, however weakly they may be proposed, Deut. vi. 20, 21. Children are often found to have very mishapen notions of divine things; but if they were duly encouraged to speak, they might vent their thoughts, which parents thus get occasion to rectify.

*4thly*, Labour to deter them from sin. The neglect of this was Eli's sin, for which God judged his house, 1 Sam. iii. 13. Endeavour to possess their hearts with an abhorrence of sinful practices, and a dread of them. Carefully check their lying, swearing, cursing, or banning, and Sabbath-breaking. If they learn these while young, they will be fair to accompany them to gray hairs. Let them not dare to meddle with what is another man's, if it were not worth a farthing. Encourage them in taking up little things, and they may come in time to bring themselves to an ill end, and you to disgrace.

*5thly*, Stir them up to the duties of holiness, and the practice of religion. Often inculcate on them the doctrine of

their sinful miserable state by nature, and the remedy provided in Christ. Shew them the necessity of holiness, pointing out Christ to them as the fountain of sanctification. Commend religion to them, and press them to the study of it, as the main thing they have to do in the world, Prov. iv. 4, &c.

*6thly*, Pray with them, and teach them to pray. For this cause let not the worship of God be neglected in your families: but for your childrens sake maintain it. No wonder that those children seek not God who never see their parents bow a knee. Ye should take them alone, and pray with them, and teach them to pray, laying the materials of prayer often before them; and let them learn the Lord's prayer, and use it as a form till such time as they can conceive a prayer by that directory. For though we do not think the Lord has bound us to that form, (if he has, the forms of the English liturgy are most impertinent, which intrude themselves on us, and do not leave us to it), yet that it may not be used as a prayer, or as a form, I know none that do affirm; though it is plain it is principally intended for a directory in prayer, Matth. vi. 9.

*Lastly*, They should often be put in mind of their baptismal vows: and I judge it adviseable, that when ye have been at pains to instruct them in the principles of religion, and they have attained to a tolerable measure of knowledge, so that with judgment they may personally consent to the covenant, as a child religiously educated may be able to do betwixt nine and twelve years of age, if not before; it would be profitable to call them before you, and solemnly declare how ye have laboured to do your duty to them, as ye engaged in their baptism. and require them expressly to consent unto the covenant for themselves; taking them personally engaged to be the Lord's.

4. Correction, Eph. vi. 4. The Greek word there signifies both correction and instruction; and so does the English word *nurture*. They must go together; for instruction without correction will hardly succeed. Parents must keep their children in subjection; if they lose their authority over them, the children will be children of Belial indeed, without a yoke, the end of which will be sad, Prov. xxix. 15. They must not only be corrected by reproof, but, when need is, with stripes, Prov. xix. 18. Begin early, as soon as they

are capable to be bettered by it; and let your love to them engage you to it; and not restrain you, Prov. xiii. 24. As ever ye would keep them out of hell, correct them, Prov. xxiii. 13, 14. I offer the following advices in this point.

(1.) Take heed ye correct not your children just to satisfy your own passion; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. That is revenge, not correction. Let the end of your correction be the child's good. It were good that parents, if they find themselves in a passion, would first beat down their own disordered spirits before they beat the child.

(2.) Let them know well wherefore ye correct them: for if the child know not what he has done amiss, he can never be bettered by the correction. And therefore pains should be taken to convince them of the evil of the thing; otherwise we deal not with them as rational creatures.

(3.) Consider well the disposition of the child. That severity may be necessary for one, that will quite crush another. A man will not take his staff to thresh his corn, nor yet his flail to beat out kail-seed. Measure your correction, then, by the child's disposition.

(4.) Go about the work with an eye to the Lord for success. Correct thy child in faith of the promise, Prov. xxii. 15. 'Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him,' viz. as a mean appointed and blessed of God for that end. It is our belief, and not our blows, that will do the business. And no doubt the neglect of this is one main cause why correction oft-times does no good.

*Lastly,* Take heed ye correct not your children only for faults against yourselves, letting them pass with their sins against God. Many will give them a blow for a disrespectful word against themselves, who for lying, banning, Sabbath-breaking, will never touch them. Their children's crossing of them must not go unpunished, but it will be long ere they correct them for their sins against God.

5. The casting them the copy of a good example, Psal. ci. 2. Children are apt to imitate their parents, but especially in evil. He that sins before a child, sins twice, for he may expect that his sin shall be acted over again. Let them, then, not see you do any thing ye would not have them to do, nor speak words ye would not have them to follow you in.



Your good precept will not stick, if it be not fastened with a good example.

6. Encouraging of them to do well; and when they do well, with kind looks, speeches, and actions, 1 Chron. xxviii. 20. Ingenuous spirits are but abused, when they are always driven by way of authority, and not drawn in the way of kindness. The name of a father and mother sounds of bowels of kindness; it is a pity it should ever degenerate into the nature of mere masterly authority.

7. *Lastly*, Seasonable disposing of them in marriage, if need be, Ruth iii. 1. 1 Cor. vii. 36. So did Abraham with his son Isaac, Gen. xxiv; and Isaac with his son Jacob, Gen. xxviii; always consulting their own inclinations, not forcing them to this or that marriage against their will, which is but either to oblige them to disobey their parents, or to make themselves miserable to please them. The neglect of this duty may prove a snare to the child, and bring grief and sorrow to both.

4. There is a duty they owe to them at all times; and that is praying for them. Sometimes this is all they have access to do for them. But be they never so far away, they should not be forgotten. Though they be out of your family, they should not be out of your prayers, as Job's children were not, Job i. 5. And parents should consider the several cases of their children, and be very particular before the Lord for them. It is marked of Job, that 'he offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all,' ib. And though in some cases this may not be convenient in family-prayers, yet, in secret, parents should have their particular petitions for their particular children, according to their particular cases.

5. *Lastly*, The duty that parents when a-dying owe to their children. We must all die, and leave our children, else they will leave us before. Lay up these few advices, then, for that time.

(1.) If providence surprise you not, call together your children, that you may do them good by your advice at your latter end, as Jacob did, Gen. xlix. 1. And do it timeously, lest, if you delay, you be not able to speak to them when you would. A word from a death-bed has usually more influence than ten words in a time of health; and words spoken with the dying breath of a parent are fair to stick.

(2.) Lay over your children whom ye are to leave, on the Lord himself; and whether ye have any thing to leave them or not, leave them on your covenanted God by faith, Jer. xlix. 11. Accept of the covenant now, renew it then, and lay the stress of their through-bearing on that God on whom ye have laid the stress of your own souls.

(3.) Give them your testimony for God, against sin, and concerning the vanity of the world. If ye have had any experience of religion, commend Christ and the way of the Lord, to them from your own experience, Gen. xlviii. 15, 16. If ye have had experience of the evil and bitterness of sin, shew them the ill of it. What courses ye have found profitable for your soul, and what hurtful; mark these to them particularly. If experience fail, yet conscience may help you out, if awakened, to this testimony.

(4.) Give them your dying advice to make choice of Christ as their portion, and holiness as their way, to cleave to it, living and dying in it. And what faults ye know are in any of them, which ye could not before get reformed, let your dying lips again reprove, exhort, obtest, and testify against, if so be they may be persuaded to hearken at last.

(5.) Bless them, in praying for them to God, the fountain of blessing; declaring withal, that they shall be blessed, if they keep the way of the Lord.

(6.) Let your temporal affairs be so ordered, as that after your decease they may not be a snare to your children, a bone of contention, or an occasion of grudge, one of them against another, Isa. xxxviii. 1.

*Use 1.* This serves for conviction and humiliation to those that are in that relation. In these things we offend all, both in the matter and manner of duty; which may send us to the Father of mercies, through Christ, for grace to remove our guilt, and to fit us to reform.

2. I exhort parents to be dutiful to their children, according to the will of God laid before you in his word. For motives, consider,

(1.) The strong tie of natural affection laid upon you. Our children are parts of ourselves, and therefore our bowels should yearn towards them, moving us to do them all the good we can. There are three things that may make our affection work towards dutifulness to them.

[1.] They have sin conveyed to them by natural genera-

tion, Psal. li. 5. We may rejoice in them; indeed, as God's gifts; but, alas! we may mourn over them as bearing naturally our own sinful image. As they are our children, they are children of wrath; they have a corrupt sinful nature conveyed unto them. Did they derive some hereditary bodily disease from us, how would we pity them, and do what in us lies to help them? but they derive a hereditary soul disease from Adam by us, and should we not pity and pray for them?

[2.] Great is the danger they are in, if we do not our duty to them. They are in a world of snares; if we be not eyes to them, they may fall to their ruin. If the wild ass's colt be not tamed by education, they are in a fair way to be ruined in time by a sinful life, Prov. xxix. 15; and if mercy prevent it not, they are in a fair way to be ruined to eternity.

[3.] Education is a blessed mean of grace. So was it to good Obadiah, 1 Kings xviii. 12; and so it was to Timothy, 2 Tim. iii. 15; compare chap. i. 5; Why, because it is a mean appointed of God for that end, and therefore may be followed in faith of the promise, Prov. xxii. 6; 'Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.' Chap. xxiii. 14; 'Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shall deliver his soul from hell.' Augustine's mother was a good woman; but such was his life, that it cost her many prayers and tears; and weeping to one about his case, 'Go thy way (said he to her), for it cannot be that a son of these tears can perish;' and so it was.

(2.) This is a great part of our generation-work, the work that we have to do for the honour of God in the world, Psal. lxxviii. 3, 4. to do our endeavour to hand down religion and honesty to the succeeding generation. And we must give an account to God of it. And as kings must account to God for what they have done for him in their kingdoms, and ministers in their congregations, so must parents account to him for what they have done in their families.

(3.) The vows of God are upon us for that cause. These are little minded by many, but God does not forget them. As Sarah was under the bond of the covenant by her husband's circumcision; so mothers are under the bond of the covenant by the vows taken on by their husbands; and are



therefore obliged to use their utmost endeavours to fulfil these vows in the education of their children.

And the due consideration of this might engage children to be obedient and pliable to the commands, instructions, and directions of their parents, for their good.

I come now to the relation betwixt masters and servants, for which you may read Col. iii. 22. and iv. 1. ‘Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven.’

The servants duty is laid down, ver. 22. ‘Servants obey in all things your masters,’ &c. Wherein consider, (1.) The duty enjoined them, ‘obedience.’ (2.) The extent of it, ‘in all things,’ in things religious and civil, in eager or harder pieces of service; nothing is excepted but what is sinful; and that is accepted in that clause, ‘your masters according to the flesh;’ that is, the outward man to distinguish them from the great Lord and master of the conscience; in which respect we are forbidden to be ‘servants of men,’ 1 Cor. vii. 23; and to ‘call no man master,’ Matth. xxiii. 8. Therefore Joseph is commended for refusing the solicitations of his mistress to uncleanness, and Saul’s servants that they would not slay the Lord’s priests. (3.) The manner of it; negatively, ‘not with eye-service;’ that is, when the master’s eye is the measure of their work, busy before him; but if he turn his back, they slacken their hand? positively, ‘in singleness of heart;’ that is, faithfully, as under the eye of God, to whom they must give account.

The master’s duty is laid down, Chap. iv. 1. Wherein (1.) We have the duty they owe to their servants. It is taken up in two general heads. [1.] They are to ‘give them what is just;’ that is, what they are obliged to give them by strict law or condition; give them what they owe them by strict justice. [2.] ‘What is equal;’ that is, what they are tied to by the law of charity and Christian meekness though not of strict justice. (2.) The reason enforcing it is, because masters on earth ‘have a Master in heaven,’ to whom they must give an account, as of other things, so of how they do to their servants.

Before I come to the duties of servants and masters, two things are to be considered, viz. who are meant by servants, and who by masters.

1. Who are meant by servants. Not to speak of bond-servants or slaves, whose bodies are perpetually under the power of their masters, their being no such servitude among us; servants, who are mercenary, or hirelings, are of two sorts. (1.) Domestic servants, who live in their master's family. (2.) Extra-domestic servants, who, though they live not in their master's family, but by themselves, yet receive his wages, whether for a few days, as day-labourers, men or women; or for certain terms, as herds, hinds, &c. All these come under the name of servants, and owe a duty to their masters, according to the law of God.

2. Who are meant by masters. (1.) There is the principal master, the master of the family, who pays the wages. (2.) There are subordinate masters. Such are, [1.] The mistress of the family, Psal. cxxiii. 2. [2.] Fellow-servants, or others deputed by, and having power from the principal master to oversee others, Gen. xxiv. 2. These must be obeyed, as having the master's authority, unless it be known that they go cross to the will and interest of the principal master. And here I shall consider,

1. The duty servants owe to their masters.

2. The duty of masters with respect to their servants.

*First*, I am to shew the duty which servants owe to their masters. They owe,

1. Inward reverence towards them, and fear of them, 1 Pet. ii. 18. Mal. i. 6. They should have a hearty respect to the character of a master, with a conscientious regard to the superiority that God has given them over them, wherein they are, so far, to them in the place of God, Eph. vi. 5. 'as unto Christ.' They should fear to offend them, to displease them by doing or omitting any thing which they know will offend them, Eph. vi. 5.

2. Honour, Mal. i. 6. They ought outwardly to carry respectfully to them, whatever they be, if they be their masters, and that both in word and deed. An humbly submissive and respectful countenance and carriage towards a master, is an excellent ornament of a servant. Neither the badness of the master, nor his goodness and piety, leaves servants a latitude in this point. Though they be bad men,

yet they are masters, 1 Tim. vi. 1. and if they be fellow-Christians, that takes not away the distance of stations, ver. 2.

3. Carefulness to maintain the credit of the family, not disclosing the secrets thereof, nor blazing abroad their infirmities. The king of Syria was troubled to think that any of his servants should be as spies upon him, 2 Kings vi. 11. And surely tale-bearing servants must be a great plague to a family. It is reckoned among the mischiefs of an evil time, when there is no trusting of any body that a man's enemies are those of his own house, Mich. vii. 6. It is a Judas-like treachery, when men or women are brought into a house to eat their bread and work their work, to go abroad among others and wound their reputation.

4. Standing to the master's allowance, both in things determined by condition and not determined. Some things, are determined by condition, that the servants may require; and when the master allows that, though the servant may think it too little, he ought not to take more at his own hand. So when servants are allowed to keep so many beasts, and no more, it is their sin to keep more; though they may think it is no fault if they can get it kept secret, it does no great wrong to the master. But that is injustice to the master, and our sin before God, in whose sight it will be reckoned theft, Gen xxx. 23. And in things not determined by condition, as the measure of diet and liberty, certainly the master's allowance in that is to be stood to. As to their diet, it is observed of the virtuous woman, Prov. xxxi. 15. 'She giveth meat to her household:' they do not take it at their own hand. The secret waste that some make in the houses of others for their bellies, is oft-times, I believe, punished with hungry bellies when they come to their own. As for their liberty and time, it is carved out by the masters, not by the servants, ver. 15, 18. And for servants to take their master's time to employ for themselves, without their master's allowance, is injustice.

5. Meek and patient submission to the checks and rebukes of the master, not answering again, Tit. ii. 9. The ears of servants are bored to hear, and their tongues not filed to speak. It is very good reason, will ye say, when we are in a fault; though many will not take a word in that case, without giving the master as good as he brings. But if they have



done no fault, they think they are not obliged to bear a rebuke. But the spirit of God does not teach so, 1 Pet. ii. 18. 19, 20. 'Servants, be subject to your masters, with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God.' It may be the master's sin to chide unreasonably, but it is the servant's sin not to bear it meekly. Sarah dealt hardly with her maid, which was her sin; yet the angel will not allow Hagar to take her heels for it, but obliges her to return and submit, Gen. xvi. 9.

9. *Lastly*, Serving them conscientiously and honestly. If servants expect their wages, they owe their master service; and God will have them to make conscience of their service. If we look to the word of God, there is much that goes to this.

(1.) Servants must be obedient and pliable to the commands of the master in all lawful things, Tit. ii. 9. Though the service required may be painful and hard yet they ought not to refuse it. Thus Jacob served Laban, Gen. xxxi. 40. 41. without considering, that he was as good a man as his master was. They that put their necks under the yoke, should resolve to bear it.

(2.) Ye should follow the masters direction in the management of the work, not only doing what you are bidden, but as ye are bidden, Psal. cxxiii. 2. The master is the eye to direct, and the servant the hand to do what is directed. That the servant may calmly advise the master, there is no doubt; but they that will do nothing pleasantly, if they get not their own way of it, forget themselves and their duty.

(3.) Ye should do your business cheerfully, Col. iii. 23. Such a servant was Jacob to his uncle Laban, Gen. xxix. 20. Sullenness and going about business grudgingly, makes it unacceptable, though otherwise well done.

(4.) Ye should do your business singly. This a servant does when he does not consult his own ease and humour, but his master's true interest, truly aiming at the thriving of his affairs, carefully avoiding every thing that may tend to

his loss; and therefore pursuing his interest when the master is absent as well as when present, aiming at his duty, as under the eye of God.

(5.) Ye should do your business faithfully. Faithfulness is a necessary qualification in a good servant, Matth. xxiv. 45. Servants having their master's substance among their hands, had need to be faithful, they having occasion to wrong him easily, if they have no respect to conscience. But the fear of God will make people faithful to men in little and in great things. They must not take of their master's goods to their own use, without his allowance, Tit. ii. 10. They must be faithful in their accounts, and not give up false accounts, as the unjust steward did, Luke xvi. 6; nor allege false commissions from their master, as Gehazi did, 2 Kings v. 22. Jacob's faithfulness was his comfort, that though he had his master's flocks among his hands, he was free of them, Gen. xxxi. 38.

6. Diligence and carefulness about their master's business, Prov. xxii. ult. Negligence and carelessness is a piece of injustice, whereby servants defraud their masters, Prov. xviii. 9; for the loss may be all one to the master, whether it be procured wilfully or through carelessness.

7. *Lastly*, Readiness and quickness in the dispatch of business. A slothful lazy servant is most uneasy, Prov. x. 26: Such a one, quick and ready, was Abraham's servant, Gen. xxiv. 33. 56. It is an apostolical precept, Rom. xii. 11. 'Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit;' for servants should ply their work, and honestly employ their strength for their master's behoof, Gen. xxxi. 6.

SECONDLY, I come now to shew the duty of masters with respect to their servants, 1. In the choice of them; and, 2. When they have got them.

*First*, In the choice of servants, two things are to be noticed.

1. Christian masters should look to the conversation of those whom they take to be their servants, that they be piously inclined, as David did, Psal. ci. 6. lest they bring an Achan into their camp. A pious servant may bring a blessing to the master, as in Joseph's case. It is observable, that Potiphar saw that God was with Joseph, ere he entrusted him with his business, Gen. xxxix. 3, 4. When Jonah came to the shipmaster, he took him into his ship without

asking questions, but ere all was done he was made to do it, Jonah i. 8.

2. They should look to their fitness and ability for their service, Psal. cxii. 5. So Laban had knowledge of what Jacob could do before he engaged with him; for he staid with him a month, Gen. xxix. 14, 15.

*Secondly*, When they have got them. There are two things in the general that they owe unto them.

1. That which is just. Just things must be done to all, and particularly to those that are under us. God takes special notice of injustice done by superiors to inferiors, who cannot so well get themselves righted. And by the law of strict justice masters are,

(1.) To allow their servants sufficient maintenance, whether within or without the house, Prov. xxvii. 27. If masters get their work, it is just they should allow them food convenient, whereby they may be fitted for their work. The mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn was not to be muzzled; for our sakes doubtless God saith it, that those who work should eat sufficiently.

(2.) To give them payment of their wages, the keeping back whereof is a great oppression and crying sin, Jam. v. 4. Masters should beware of all fraud and deceit in this. It stands as a blot on Laban's memory, that he did not keep conditions with Jacob, but changed his wages ten times, Gen. xxxi. 41. for which he might make some plausible pretence as well as others. To pay them what is insufficient, putting them off with any thing that may make up, account, is unjust, Amos viii. 6. Nay, the keeping it up, and delaying to pay them, when it is in the power of our hand, is contrary to justice, Deut. xxiv. 14, 15.

(3.) They should require no more of them than they are able to do. Servants should not be kept idle, Prov. xxix. 21; neither should they be rigorously pressed above their power, but allowed convenient time for rest and refreshment, Lev. xxv. 43. It is just not only because they are fellow-creatures, but fellow Christians.

(4.) Oversight and direction in what they should do Prov. xxxi. 27. Thus Boaz is found in the field with his reapers. It is very unjust to find fault with what servants do, while men will not be at pains to tell them how they would have their business done.



2. They owe them that which is equal by the law of Christian meekness and charity. Now, thus they owe unto them these things.

(1.) Masters ought to rule their servants gently and meekly, as being of the same blood with themselves, Eph. vi. 9. A proud and imperious carriage does not become Christianity. They should moderate or relax threatening, not do all with them with boasting and terror, but by meekness draw them on.

(2.) They should be ready to hear them in what they have to say. It is the character of a Nabal, that 'he was such a son of Belial, that a man could not speak to him,' 1 Sam. xxv. 17. Job declares himself to have been of another temper, Job xxxi. 13. The advice of a servant modestly proposed, is not to be slighted, 2 Kings v. 13, 14. and if there be any thing they have to complain of, masters should hearken thereto, and do them right, as they would have God to hearken to themselves.

(3.) They should be wary of hearkening to ill tales concerning them, Prov. xxix. 12. An easiness to believe every tale makes an uneasy life, especially ill tales concerning those in whom people are particularly concerned.

(4.) They ought to take care of them when they are sick, especially when they have none other to care for them. It is highly reasonable that they should be cared for in their sickness by those in whose service they have spent their strength, Matth. viii. 6. It is noted as a piece of the cruelty of an Amalekite, that he left his servant when sickness overtook him, 1 Sam. xxx. 13.

(5.) They should encourage and shew special favour, even by letting something beyond condition fall to faithful and diligent servants. This is very equal; reason, interest, and religion, call for it, Prov. xiv. ult. For a faithful servant is one of the best of friends.

(6.) *Lastly*, They should be concerned for the good of the souls of their servants. For in this case masters are instead of parents to them. They should instruct them in the principles of religion, and labour to train them up in the ways of godliness, setting them on and stirring them up to duty, Gen xviii. 19. They should daily pray with them and for them, by keeping up religious duties in their family, Jer. x. 25. And they should labour to bring them to the public

ordinances, Josh. xxiv. 15. restrain them by their authority from scandalous and sinful words or deeds, as from profaning of the Sabbath, &c. and reprove them for their sins against God, as well as faults against themselves; and if they will not refrain they ought to turn them out of their family, Psal. ci. 7.

*Use 1.* This may serve to convince and humble both masters and servants.

*Use I* exhort servants to be dutiful to their masters. For motives, consider,

1. That in your service ye have two masters one on earth, and another in heaven, Col. iii. 23. Your master on earth says, Do this so or so; and your Master in heaven says, 'Whatsoever he saith unto you do it,' John ii. 5. And here know, (1.) That your Master in heaven has given you his orders how ye must carry in service to men, as well as in praying, &c. to himself. (2.) He sees how ye obey these orders. His eye is always on you. (3.) He will call you to an account how ye obey these. (4.) He will account the service faithfully done, service to himself; and, on the other hand, undutifulness to men, undutifulness to himself.

2. God himself will be your paymaster, according as ye carry yourselves in your station. (1.) God will reward dutiful servants. There is a temporal reward that God ordinarily bestows on such, Prov. xvii. 2. 'A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.' And that is what Providence lays to the hands of honest servants, that are not sincere Christians. But true Christian servants shall get the reward of the heavenly inheritance, Col. iii. 24. (2.) God will reward undutiful servants too, ver. 25. Ordinarily God writes his indignation against their undutifulness in their lot in the world; but if they repent not, the quarrel is pursued to another world. That is a sad word, Luke xvi. 11. 'If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?'

Let masters be dutiful to their servants according to the will of God. For motives, consider,

1. Ye are as fathers to them. The fifth command supposeth this; and so the scripture elsewhere teacheth, 2 Kings v. 13. Ye are civil fathers, and instead of natural fathers to them. They are committed to your charge, as under your

roof and power. God would have all superiors to put on fatherly bowels towards their inferiors, as he who is supreme Lord calls himself ‘Our father which is in heaven.’ If masters would thus look on themselves, it would engage them to their duty towards their servants. When God brings a servant into a house, especially those of the younger sort, either wanting parents, or leaving them to serve you, he says, as John xix. 26, 27. ‘Man, behold thy son;’ and to the servant, ‘Behold thy father.’

2. Ye have a master which is over you and your servants too, to whom ye must give account, Col. iv. 1. And there is no respect of persons with him. He has given a law to the master as well as to the servant; and in judging of them he will not favour the master more than the servant. Pride makes men imperious and oppressive. Here is a sovereign remedy to curb it. Let us remember that we have a Master in heaven, Job xxxi. 13, 14. And so much for family-relations.

I come now to consider the relation betwixt ecclesiastical fathers and their children. These fathers are preaching and ruling elders. Here I shall consider, 1. The duties of ministers and people; and, 2. Those of ruling elders and people.

FIRST, I shall shew the duties of ministers and people.

*First*, I shall shew the duty people owe to their ministers.

1. They owe them singular reverence, and that because of that honourable station wherein Christ has placed them, sending them to deal with sinners in his own stead, 1 Cor. iv. 1. 2 Cor. v. 20. This founds that debt of reverence, Rom. x. 15. and should be expressed in word and deed. They are the stars whom Christ holds in his right hand; and though they shine not so clear as ye would wish, people would beware of treading them under foot, seeing Christ holds them in his right-hand, Rev. i. 20. compare chap. ii. 4. 14. 20. &c.

2. Endear'd love to them for their work's sake, 1 Thess. v. 13. Gal. iv. 14, 15. The gospel is the greatest benefit that men can partake of; and it is very natural to love those who are the instruments by whom the Lord conveys great benefits to us. And as ministers must lay their account with the hatred of those that hate the light, so those that get good of ordinances will as naturally love them as the child does the father and mother. But as there are unnatural children



in the family, who little regard the father that begat them, or the mother that bare them ; so it is not to be wondered, that there are unnatural children in the church, that reject those by whose means they have got any acquaintance with religion that they have, and cast reproaches on the breasts of ordinances, in sucking of which they grew up.

3. Diligent attendance on ordinances of all sorts dispensed by them, as word, sacraments, catechising, &c. Heb. x. 25. Luke x. 16. In vain do these stars shine, if there be none to receive their light. The same word that obliges ministers to dispense ordinances, must needs oblige people to attend them ; and that even though they may lie at a considerable distance from them, 2 Kings iv. 22, 23. The woman there mentioned had sixteen miles to go to the man of God.

4. Submission to them in things pertaining to their office, Heb. xiii. 17. submitting to discipline exercised by them in the name of Christ ; to their instructions, cordially receiving them from the word ; to their reproofs, whether public or private ; to their exhortations and charges, wherein they hold forth to you the will of God, ib. Jam. i. 21. They who do otherwise, sin against their own souls, as well as discourage ministers by their untractableness, and do but lay up witnesses against themselves, to be led against them at the great day. It is not the hearers of the word, but the doers thereof, that are justified. It will be no advantage to you to have heard, but never complied.

5. Praying for them, 1 Thess. v. 25. The work in which they are engaged is a great work. Who is sufficient for it ? They have need of prayers for them. Your own interest may engage you to it. They may do their work, but the success of it must be fetched from heaven by prayer, 1 Cor. x. 4. We have the sword, but how shall we get the arm ? We may compass Jericho, and give the shout ; but it is the power of God that must make the walls to fall. Like Gideon's three hundred men, we may bear the lamps in our empty pitchers, blow with the trumpet, and the earthen pitchers may be broken in the cause, but God only can do the work, Judges vii.

6. People should be very tender of the reputation of ministers ; it being a tender thing, so much interwoven with the success of the gospel. The Spirit of God, seeing that the devil would be very ready to mark at their reputation in a

special manner, by a wicked world and false brethren, has set a double hedge about it, 1 Tim. v. 19. 'Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.' So that ye ought not only not to slander them, but to be loath to receive those slanders vented by others against them, believing nothing therein without proof.

7. *Lastly*, Maintenance. This by divine right is due from people to their ministers, 1 Cor. ix. 14.

*Secondly*, I shall shew the duty of ministers to their people,

1. They owe tender love to the souls of their people.— They should be full of bowels towards them, 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8. which should appear in their preaching, and all parts of their work.

2. Diligent and faithful dispensing of all gospel-ordinances to them, word, sacraments, &c. It is a labour, and they must take it so, willing to spend and be spent in the service of their Lord, and of precious souls. And indeed they are as lighted candles, which while they shine waste, 2 Tim. iv. 2. 1 Thess. ii. 3, 4.

3. Behaving so as they may be examples of holiness and tenderness, Tit. ii. 7. for precept, without example, will have little influence.

4. Watching over their flocks, that being ready to be acquainted with their state and case, they may be in capacity to instruct, comfort, and admonish them, &c. as the case requires, Heb. xiii. 7.

5. *Lastly*, Praying for them, Eph. i. 15, 16.

SECONDLY, I come to shew the duties of ruling elders and the people over whom they are appointed overseers. And as we are this day to ordain some to that office, I shall discourse of this subject a little more fully than I would otherwise have done in a catechetical exercise. I propose to discourse on this occasion, from that text.

1 TIM. v. 17.—*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*

THE church is the kingdom of Christ, and the holy scriptures are the book of the manner of the kingdom. There the institution of church officers, their work, and the duties owing them by others, are only to be found. And whatever

officers of the church men pretend to be, if their office be not found there, they have no due call to their work, but are usurpers and intruders.

In the words read, the apostle gives us the work assigned by Jesus Christ to elders of the church, and what is due for it unto them from the church : *Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour.* Here he distinguishes two sorts of elders of the church.

1. Ruling elders: The word *elder* originally is a name of age; but here, and in many other places of scripture, it is evident, that it is the name of an office, being the name of ruling church-officers, because usually taken out of the elder sort, or that, though of the younger, yet they ought to be men of gravity and authority. Here consider,

(1.) The work of these elders, from whence their designation is taken. It is *to rule*, and govern the church, as those who are set over it by the Lord. For the Lord has not left his church in a state of anarchy and confusion, but appointed some to rule, and others to be ruled.

(2.) How they ought to manage their work, *well*; i. e. rightly, worthily, according to the rules prescribed them by Christ, the chief bishop.

(3.) What is due from the church to those who so manage it; *double*, i. e. abundant *honour*. This honour implies two things, viz (1.) Maintenance. This is evident from ver. 18. (2.) Esteem and reputation, Phil. ii. 29.

Episcopalians, as they have given us the prelate, an officer whom Christ never appointed, so they rob us of the ruling elder, which the text so plainly discovers to be a church-officer of divine institution. To evite the force of which, they turn this elder into various shapes: but in vain. For by the elders that rule well, cannot be understood superannuated ministers, as some say; for it is evident that the preaching elder is to have more honour than this elder. But it is shocking to the common sense of the people of God, to honour and esteem a young laborious minister more than an old one, who has spent his strength in the work. Nor by them are to be understood magistrates as others say; for at this time they were not so much as members of the church. Nor are deacons meant hereby, as others say; for their work is not to rule the church, but to serve tables, Acts vi. 2. Nor are we to understand by them the fixed pastors of flocks,



in opposition to those that travelled up and down to visit and confirm the churches, whom they understand by those that labour, namely, to weariness, in the last part of the verse. For the work of the fixed pastor is such a labour too, 1 Thess. v. 12. Nor yet such as were unfit for preaching yet administered the sacraments, prayed with the church, and privately admonished the unruly. But such an officer, I am sure, is unknown to the Bible. It remains, then, that they are those whom we call ruling elders, whose work is, as in the text, to govern the church, but not to preach the word; and therefore they are distinguished from preaching elders, as is plain from the particle *especially*; as Phil. iv. 24. ‘All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar’s household.’ Chiefly is the same word in the Greek that is here rendered especially; and it plainly implies, that there were some saints at Rome not of Cæsar’s household. So here are described some elders that rule well, and do not labour in word and doctrine.

2. Preaching elders: Their work is to preach the gospel; to labour in the word and doctrine. To them in a special manner, by the text, *double honour* is due, *i. e.* maintenance and respect, forasmuch as their office is greater and more honourable, not only in ruling of the church, as the others do, but preaching of the gospel besides. Where, by the by we may see, that if Paul’s doctrine had place in the world, the preaching parish-minister would have more honour than the non-preaching bishop, who contents himself with ruling but puts not his shoulders to the labour in the word and doctrine. Maintenance, we see, is due to both sort of elders, by divine right. But it is no sin for either to quit their right in certain circumstances. And with us the ruling elders are allowed no maintenance, but the preaching elders are. The reason of this is the poverty of the church that cannot bear it; and that our ruling elders are not taken off their secular employments, as ministers are.

The doctrine deducible from the text is,

DOCT. ‘Ruling elders rightly discharging their duty, are worthy of abundant honour.’

Having sufficiently cleared the divine institution of ruling elders from the text, which is clear also from Rom. xii. 8. 1 Cor. xii. 28. I shall, in prosecution of the doctrine, shew,

- I. What is the duty of these officers.
- II. What it is to discharge the duties of that office well.
- III. What is the honour that people owe to their ruling elders.
- IV. Apply.

I. I am to shew what is the duty of these officers.

The apostle tells us in the general, that their work as ruling elders is to rule the church. The keys of jurisdiction and government are not given to one, but to the unity of church-officers acting together; so, together with the pastor, they are to rule the congregation. God setting a minister in a congregation, says to him, It is not meet the man should be alone, I will make him an help meet for him.— And a society of diligent and faithful elders are a meet help indeed. And without that the weight of a congregation is too heavy for the shoulders of one, as *Exod. xviii. 18.* But more particularly,

1. They are to be careful overseers of the manners of the people. Hence the apostle says to the elders of Ephesus, *Acts xx. 28.* ‘Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God.’ And as ministers are a mouth to the church, so they are to be instead of eyes. And therefore it is necessary, for the good of a congregation, that there be of them in every corner. For they are truly watchmen, whom the Holy Ghost has set over the flock, as well as ministers are. And they ought to acquaint themselves with the way of the people, that so they may encourage those that do well, and warn those that do evil. And unless elders do so, and communicate their help in that matter to the pastor, he may be long in a congregation, and yet be a stranger to many under his charge; and so ministerial visitations may be very useless.

2. Though they are not to preach the word, yet they are to apply the word privately to people by virtue of their office. They are to have a mouth to speak, as well as eyes to take heed to the flock of God, *1 Tim. iii. 2.*—‘Apt to teach.’ There is a word pat to this purpose, *1 Thess. v. 12.*—‘Are over you, and admonish you.’ It is the same word in our text. The word *admonish* there used, is far from expressing the full meaning of the word the Holy Ghost useth here,

used also, Eph. vi. 4. It properly signifies to 'put into the mind.' And so it implies a fivefold duty.

(1.) Exciting people to their duty. Observing negligence, they ought to stir up people to their duty; e. g. those that neglect family-prayer, secret prayer, attending regularly on ordinances, or are negligent of their souls state any way, they should drop a word to stir them up.

(2.) Rebuking of sin. Reproofs of wisdom are as necessary for church-members as salt is to keep meat from corrupting. It is necessary to discourage sin and wickedness in the church, which should be a holy society. And there wants not occasion enough for this, in swearing, lying, profaning of the Sabbath, drunkenness, strife, variance, and whatsoever is contrary to the rules of the gospel.

(3.) Warning such as they see in hazard of sin; to tell them of the snare, their hazard and danger, and so to prevent people's falling into it, as far as lies in their power. Sometimes people may be discerned staggering, and a word then duly put into their mind may, by the blessing of God, keep them from falling.

(4.) Comforting those that are cast down, and strengthening the weak. It was the practice of holy Job, chap. iv. 4. 'Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees.' And church-rulers ought always to have a special eye upon those that are the weak and distressed in Christ's flock, to labour to support them in the Lord.

(5.) Instructing and informing them privately. And indeed rule without instruction is dumb, and not agreeable to the way of our Lord's governing his house; and excitations, rebukes, &c. can never be rightly managed without information of the mind. For if we would gain our end in dealing with people, we must not think it enough to tell them their duty or their sin, but by reasoning with them to convince their consciences.

These things are the duty of all church-members, however little it is laid to heart. Only what others are bound to by the common band of Christianity, we are bound to by our office, Lev. xix. 17. 1 Thess. v. 14.

3. They are to visit the sick, and should be sent for, for that end, Jam. v. 14, 15. But otherwise discretion and christian love may engage them to go even when they are not



sent for. They ought to pray with them and for them. And, by the same reason, they are to counsel, instruct, and comfort them, according to the grace bestowed on them, and as they see the party's case does require. This would be a means to render the office more esteemed than, alas! it is with many. And it needs not hinder the pastor's visits.

4. They are to concur with the pastor in the exercise of discipline, according to the word of God, and the constitutions of the church agreeable thereto. For ministers and elders make up that church, having the power of censures, Matth. xviii. 17. And thus they are to delate scandalous persons to the judicatory, either when their private admonitions will not do, or where the offence is in its own nature public, and cannot be passed with private admonition. And in the managing of matters in the judicatory, they are not only to give their opinion and vote according to their light, but to reason the matter calmly, for the finding out of the best expedient. Admission to, and debarring from, the sacrament of the Lord's supper, is a weighty piece of this work, belonging to the kirk-session, wherein all tenderness, caution, and wisdom should be used, to separate as far as we can betwixt the precious and the vile, that holy things be not cast to dogs.

As for the collecting and distributing of the church's money, it is so far from being the main work of ruling elders, that it is no part of their work as elders at all, but belongs to the deacons, which is an inferior office. But the superior offices of the church including the inferior ones, the elders may do it, and must do it, where there are not deacons:

II. I come now to shew, what it is to discharge the duties of that office well.

1. It is to discharge it faithfully, 1 Cor. iv. 2. It is a great trust the master puts us in, and we must act in it with that faithfulness to our own souls, and the souls of those who are under our charge, as our conscience may not have wherewith to reproach us.

2. Diligently, Rom. xii. 8. The slothful servant that closeth his eyes, and gives up his watch, will never be approved of God. Be diligent in your duty, and it will not want its reward.

3. Zealously, Psal. lxxix. 9. Zeal for the master's honour, and advancing the kingdom of Christ in real holiness, and suppressing the devil's kingdom in sin and wickedness, in the congregation, and otherwise as we have access, is well becoming church-officers especially.

4. Prudently, Matth. xxiv. 45. Church-officers had need to join the wisdom of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove. And they will find it necessary many a time to sweeten with prudent management the bitter pills they must give, Gal. vi. 1.

III. I proceed to shew, what is that honour that people owe to their ruling elders.

1. They ought to esteem and respect them for their work's sake, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. Their work is honourable, their Master whom they serve in that work is great, and the advantage of their work redounds to the church. People's esteem of them is but a necessary encouragement to them in the work they have undertaken, without any prospect of worldly advantage. And if people esteemed the Lord's work, they would even esteem the workers too.

2. Obedience and submission to them in their doing the work of their office, Heb. xiii. 17. If it be their duty to watch over you, excite and admonish you, &c. ye ought not to account them meddling in what belongs not to them, when they inquire into your way. Ye ought to fall in with the duties they excite you to; meekly to receive their rebukes, admonitions, and warnings; honourably to receive their consolations, as those that have a commission from the Lord; and heartily to receive their good admonition and counsel; and subjecting yourselves as Christ's subjects to the discipline of his house.

3. They ought to pray to God for them, 1 Thess. v. 15. It is a great work we have in hand, and your interest is concerned in our right discharge of it; which therefore should make you to give us a share in your prayers.

4. Shutting your ears against reproaches cast on them, and being backward to receive ill reports of them, staving them off, unless there be sufficient evidence, 1 Tim. v. 19. Church-officers are those whom Satan mainly aims to discredit, and therefore stirs up rotten-hearted hypocrites, false brethren, and a profane generation, to cast dirt upon them, that so

their work may be marred in their hands, religion despised, and sinners hardened.

*Use 1.* As to you that are already in this honourable office, and you that are now to be ordained to it, I exhort you to labour rightly to discharge your duty. To press this exhortation, I offer the following motives.

*Mot. 1.* Consider it is a sacred office in the house of God, to which God has called you; and therefore let us together take that exhortation, Acts xx. 28. ‘Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.’ The office is honourable in itself, however the world esteem of it. David though a king, would have thought it no disparagement to him, when he said, ‘A day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness,’ Psal. lxxxiv. 10. But it has work annexed to it; and being sacred, it is not to play with. Labour to approve yourselves to your Lord and master.

*Mot. 2.* Ye have thereby a fair occasion to be serviceable to God and to advance Christ’s kingdom, and suppress that of the devil, in the congregation. And O what should we not do to do good to souls? Jam. v. 20. ‘Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.’ I think that now, of a considerable time, I and my brethren of the eldership might have said, ‘The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the wall,’ Neh. iv. 10; and it has gone near to the sinking of some of our spirits. But now that God has inclined the hearts of so many to come over and help us; if we take courage in our Master’s work, to ply it faithfully, diligently, zealously, and prudently, and the Lord bless us with unity among ourselves, and real zeal for his honour, to put to our shoulders jointly to the work, we may hope, by the blessing of God, to see a more promising face on this congregation, sin more discouraged, and piety more increased.

*Mot. ult.* You and I must give an account to our great Master, how we have carried ourselves in his work, Heb. xiii. 17. If we be faithful we shall not want our reward from



the chief Shepherd, who will give us a crown of life. If we be unfaithful, woe will be unto us for betraying our trust.

I give you a few advices.

1. Remember always that it is God whom ye have to do with. This will make you little to regard men's feud or favour, if ye do your work agreeable to God's will.

2. Study to act in dependence on the Lord; for he sends none a-warfare on his own charges. Eye his promised assistance, when ye set about your work.

3. Labour to believe, that the way of uprightness and faithfulness is the sure way. 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him,' Prov. xvi. 7. 'He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth him,' Prov. xxviii. 23. Let men's corruptions say what they will, their consciences will speak in favour of faithful dealing.

4. Watch over your own persons, that in your personal walk ye be blameless and exemplary, 1 Tim. iii. 1, 2, 3. If ye be untender in your walk, ye will do more hurt than ye can do good. Being honoured to be governors in the house of a holy God, ye must be holy as the master is holy; tender in your words, circumspect in your actions, and therefore watchful over your hearts.

5. Watch over your families. Every one that has a family is obliged to this, and you in a special manner, 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5. The sinful practices of those of your family will reflect a peculiar dishonour on you, and by you on your Lord and Master. Therefore your families should be a church wherein God is to be duly worshipped morning and evening; and good discipline kept up by admonition, reproof, and watchfulness.

6. Ye must watch over one another, each over his fellow-elders, knowing, that any thing scandalous in one of the society reflects a dishonour on the whole, and by them on the Lord himself. And if ye be not careful on that side, there will be little good of your watching over the flock. And therefore strict discipline among yourselves is absolutely necessary.

USE II. As to you the people, I would exhort you to make conscience of your duty towards your officers. Alas! for the little conscience that is made of that among us. I

am sure we may find matter of mourning this day in that matter.

Instead of honouring of them, many despise and pour contempt on them, more than otherwise they would do; thus vilely treating their sacred office.

Instead of submission and obedience, what refractoriness and spurning of discipline for scandalous offences! Some cannot endure to be told of their faults; but if we admonish or reprove them, even privately, they are made worse instead of better; and rather than take a reproof, they will give up with ordinances.

Instead of being careful of their reputation, some will bawl out upon them, and abuse them on every occasion. And there is nothing with many more readily received, than the vomit of malicious and spiteful spirits against ministers and elders, which is greedily licked up, 1 Cor. iv. 13.

Hence it is, that men's hands are weakened, and they are discouraged in their work, while they see the people of that temper, Hos. iv. 4. And hence it is, that it is so very hard to get men to undertake the office of elders; for they see that if they engage therein, they must be the very butt of the malice and spite of bitter spirits; and that if they will be faithful, they engage themselves in a fighting life, and that the stream will go against them. But allow me to put you in mind of three things.

1. Whose part you act in that matter. It is the part of Satan against these men and yourselves too. Can you fall upon a more expedite way to advance the kingdom of the devil in the congregation, than to discourage and weaken the hands of those that are set over you in the Lord? Is there a fairer way to rout the army, than to make their leaders useless?

2. Whose servants they are. They are clothed with a commission from the King of the church; and the contempt poured on them reaches to their Master: 'He that despiseth you (says he), despiseth me,' Luke x. 16. Will the laws of the land avenge the affronts done to a petty officer, who comes to execute the sentence of a civil court? did David severely avenge on the Ammonites the maltreating of his servants, whom he sent on a congratulatory message to them as ye find in 2 Sam. x? and will not the Lord Jesus resent

in his wrath the maltreatment of those that are clothed with his commission?

3. *Lastly*, Are ye not the professed subjects of the kingdom of Christ? Why then will ye not submit yourselves to the laws of his house? Why will ye not be obedient in the Lord to those whom he sets over you, complying with their exhortations, admonitions, and rebukes? Luke xix 27. Why do not ye strengthen their hands in the Lord's work? If ye have any interest in Zion's King, it is the work of our common Lord, which you are obliged to in a private way, as well as they by virtue of their office; and therefore ye are bound to co-operate with them in what serves to promote the interest of that King, whose servants you profess to be.

I proceed now to consider the relation betwixt political fathers and their children; that is, magistrates and subjects.

*First*, I shall shew the duty of subjects to magistrates.

1. They owe them singular respect and honour, 1 Pet. ii. 17. They are to be honoured by us in our hearts, thinking of and esteeming them reverently, and carrying a reverent fear and awe of them within our breasts, 1 Sam. xxvi. 16, 17. Prov. xxiv. 21. And this is to be expressed in a respectful behaviour towards them in word and deed.

The grounds of this are specially two. (1) The ordinance of God, whereby they are set above us in the way of power and authority, Rom. xiii: and subjects ought to walk in a conscientious regard to the superiority that God has given their rulers over them. (2.) The image of God that shines in their dominion and eminency above their subjects, Psal. lxxxii. 6. They are God's vicegerents on earth, whose office bears a representation of God's dominion.

2. Subjects owe them the charity to construct the best of their actions that they will bear, and to beware of passing a rash judgment of their administrations. Notable is the instance of it in David, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. 'Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant: if the Lord have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go serve other gods.' The liberty that many take in speaking of



magistrates, and wresting their actions still to the worst side, is what proceeds not from the spirit of the gospel, but is contrary to the word, an effect of their own pride and presumption, *Exod. xxii. 28. Eccl. x. 20. 2 Pet. ii. 10. Jude 8.* This is also highly reasonable, and hath these grounds. (1.) That candour and charity we owe to all men, but in a special manner to our superiors, requires it, *1 Cor. xiii. 5, 7.* (2.) Our unacquaintedness with the springs of public business, secrets of government, and reasons of state, *Prov. xxv. 3.* And natural modesty, as well as religion, teaches men not to answer a matter before they hear it, *Prov. xviii. 13.* This dutiful children will allow to their parents, wives to their husbands, servants to their masters, and inferiors to their superiors; and why should not magistrates have it too?

3. Subjection, loyalty, and obedience to their just laws and commands. It is bad religion where loyalty to the magistrate must stand in place of all religion towards God; but it is also bad religion where people's pretended religion towards God justles out their loyalty to the magistrate, *Rom. xiii. 5.* This duty Papists exempt churchmen from; and no wonder, for it is a part of the character of Antichrist, *2 Thess. ii. 4;* but the scripture subjects ministers to the magistrates, as having souls as well as others, *Rom. xiii.* 'Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.'

4. The payment of their tribute, *Rom. xiii. 6, 7.* This is a debt of thankfulness, and justice too, for the benefits of government which the subjects enjoy, without which the government cannot be supported, but all would go into confusion.

5. Defending of them in danger, each one according to his station, *2 Sam. xviii. 3. 1 Sam. xxvi. 15.*

6. *Lastly*, Prayer to God for them; supplications for supply of wants, prayers for good things to them, intercessions for turning away of evil from them, and thanksgivings for mercies bestowed on them, *1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.* There is a reason for it too; for the welfare of subjects is wrapt up in theirs, *ib.* Much depends on their management, God's honour, our own good; and their high place has many dangers, difficulties, snares, and temptations.

USE. Let me therefore exhort you in the words of the apostle, *1 Pet. ii. 13, 14.* 'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the

king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.' Let us honour and dutifully subject ourselves, according to the will of God, to our gracious Sovereign King George, our rightful and lawful King by virtue of the laws of Scotland, pointed at in the claim of right, and upon which was founded the late happy Revolution. Let us adore that bountiful providence, by which his grandfather [Frederick Elector Palatine of the Rhine], having lost one kingdom [that of Bohemia], besides his private estate, in the cause of the Protestant religion, three kingdoms are now conferred on the grandson. Let us thank our God, who did so seasonably bring him to the throne, and that in peace, to the surprise of all parties, so as we were like men that dreamed. Let us suppose that the Popish Pretender had effectuated his purpose, what a case had we been in this day! Yet rejoice with trembling; it is hard to say that Heaven and these sinful nations are become friends yet. Let us be dutiful to subordinate magistrates under him, and honour those whom God has honoured by their office, saying to them, *Ye are gods*. Let us not stumble at theists, Jacobites, and malignants, against our holy religion, by contempt of the magistrate. We read the Bible, where subjection is commanded to subjects oft and again, even to magistrates that were enemies to Christianity. We are the followers of that Jesus who paid his tribute, and taught the people of the Jews, who were more solemnly covenanted with God, and more strictly bound up in the choice of their kings, than any nation under heaven, yet not to deny their tribute to Cæsar, the Heathen Roman emperor, who then was their chief magistrate, Matth. xxii. 19,—21.

*Secondly*, I shall shew the duty of magistrates to their subjects, which I shall only name.

1. They ought to establish good laws among their subjects, and to see them duly executed, Zech. viii. 16. 2 Chron. xix. 5, 6, 7.

2. To govern them with wisdom, justice, and clemency, 2 Chron. i. 10.

3. To punish evil-doers, and encourage them that do well, Rom. xiii. 3.

4. To protect them, and provide for their common safety,

1 Tim. ii. 2; to see to their prosperity, and not to oppress them, Prov. xxviii. 16.

5. *Lastly*, They ought to promote true religion, and advance the interest of Christ's kingdom among their subjects, Isa. xlix. 23. Some will have the magistrate to be the fountain of church-power. Others leave him nothing to do in religion but to defend the church, and execute her acts. Thus go the Papists. Truth goes the middle way, allowing the magistrate a cumulative, though not a privative, power in church-matters; and though he ought not to exercise a spiritual function, yet he can command and oblige ministers and other church-officers to do their duty, authoritatively call them to do it. And this is no more to usurp church-power, than a ministers charging magistrates from the word, is to usurp civil power. See Confession of Faith.

There are other relations that import a mere preference; as, betwixt the aged and the younger, the weaker in gifts and the stronger, and between equals.

*First*, As to the relation betwixt the aged and the younger,

1. I shall consider very briefly the duties of the younger to the aged, for these are fathers and mothers in scripture-language, 1 Tim. v. 1.

(1.) They ought to submit to them, so as to follow their wise advice, and not to stand upon the points with them, but to be ready to yield to them, where lawfully it may be done, 1 Pet. v. 5.

(2.) They ought to honour them, and carry respectfully to them. The Ancient of days, commands us to honour old age, Lev. xix. 32.

2. The aged ought, (1.) To be ready to profit the younger sort by their good advice, to tutor them, as Eli did young Samuel, 1 Sam. iii. 9. (2.) To give them the example of a virtuous and holy life, Tit. ii. 2.

*Secondly*, The duties of the weaker in gifts to the stronger are,

(1.) To reverence and respect them for the gifts of God in them, Gen. xlv. 8. (2.) To be willing and ready to learn of them. (3.) To beware of judging harshly of them in things wherein they have a greater liberty than them, Rev. xiv. 3.

The duties of the stronger in gifts are, (1.) To communicate cheerfully to them what God has given them, and so



to help them by their gifts. (2.) To encourage them, and bear with their infirmities, Rom. xv. 1.

*Lastly*, The duties of equals are, (1.) To regard the dignity and worth of each other, and carry respectfully to them. 1 Pet. ii. 17. (2.) To carry modestly towards one another, preferring in honour each other, Rom. xii. 10. (3.) To endeavour after and rejoice in one another's welfare as their own, ver. 15, 16.

II. I proceed now to shew, what is forbidden in the fifth commandment. According to our Catechism, it forbids 'the neglecting of, or doing any thing against the honour and duty which belongeth to every one in their several places and relations.'

This question is a field as large, or rather larger than the former, in so far as to one duty several sins are opposed: but fearing that ye cannot bear enlargement, having heard so much already on these relations, I shall contract my discourse on this into a very narrow compass.

This command is broken, (1.) By neglect of the duties we owe to our relations, which ye have heard. (2.) By doing any thing against and contrary to these duties.

*First*, Husbands and wives break this command, and sin against one another, many ways. As particularly,

1. Against that tender conjugal love they owe to one another, is all unkindness, whereby, laying aside, and divesting themselves of natural affection, they are surly to, careless of, and unconcerned for their relatives, or their comfort. Of this sort are their bitter speeches, reproaching and reviling one another. That selfishness, whereby they are at no pains to please one another in lawful things, and void of sympathy in one another's joys and griefs; unreasonable suspicions and jealousies, whatever be done to please them; blazing abroad their own shame, in speaking to the discredit of their relatives; contempt of and despising one another. All these are quite opposite to conjugal love.

2. Against that faithfulness they owe to one another, in respect of their bodies, is infidelity in the gross breach of the marriage-contract, deserting and leaving one another, and defrauding one another. In respect of their means, is all idleness, mismanagement, and wastery; and in respect of their souls, is unconcernedness about them, being at no pains

to instruct, admonish, and watch over one another; and if at any time they tell them of their faults, it is to their reproach, being before others, or in their passion, so that it can do no good. And much more when they become snares and hinderances to one another, instead of meet helps, leading and provoking their relatives to sin against God, and ruin their own souls.

Wives particularly sin against their husbands, by casting off all reverence to them, carrying themselves imperiously towards them, being disobedient, wilful, and untractable, and, like Vashti, Esth. i. 10, 11, 12. who would not come to the king, when sent for by him, will not go an inch by their own will to please them. It is not their honour to command, whose province God has made it to obey, Ezek. xvi. 30. Eph. v. ult.

Husbands sin against their wives in dealing untenderly with them, tyrannizing and domineering over them in a masterful way, not protecting them from the insults of others, nor providing for them; giving them that are their wives no trust, but making them, like Nabal, accountable to the utmost farthing; nor encouraging and praising them when they do well; most of all in beating them, in use only with furious or mad men, Eph. v. 25. 29.

*Secondly*, As to parents and children :

1. Children sin against their parents by disobedience to them. Such are in the midst of the black roll, Rom. i. 30. and are in a near way to ruin, Prov. xxx. 17. So do they by all irreverence to them, and slighting and dishonouring them in word and deed, Deut. xxvii. 16. and much more by cursing of them, Exod. xxi. 17. Many, again, sin against God and their parents, being unteachable, and will not hearken to their instruction, Prov. v. 7. they will not take a sharp word from them, but their hearts rise against them and it too, Prov. xiii. 18. and others, though they will bear with words, yet they are stubborn, and will not submit to correction, Deut. xxi. 18, 19. And what will we say of those that, like cursed Ham, make a jest of their parents infirmities, waste their substance, and prove unnatural and hard-hearted to them when they are old and in distress? Prov. xix. 26. Finally, they sin by disposing of themselves to callings, or in marriage, without consent of their parents Gen. xxvi. 34, 35.

2. Parents sin against their children many ways, while they are not concerned for them while infants ; but many are careless as to the bringing up of their children to some honest employment, but, by encouraging them in idleness, prove a snare to them. Most men, if they bring their children to be able to shift for a livelihood to themselves, think they have done enough, while they have not been at pains to bring them up for God. Many will learn them to work that will not learn them to read, pray, &c. What shall we say of those that will learn them to ban, swear, lie, pick and steal, and encourage them in such things? Some kill their children by cockering of them ; they indulge them fondly to their ruin. And how indiscreetly will parents dote on one child by another, where it is not grace but mere fancy, that makes the difference? Gen. xxv. 28. Some, on the other hand, are wofully harsh to their children, and break their spirits, by holding them so short by the head that they are driven to extremities, using them as drudges rather than as children, immoderately beating them when they are in a fault, and inveighing against them with bitter words, Col. iii. 21. indiscreet and untender dealing with them with respect to their callings or marriages.

*Thirdly,* As to masters and servants ;

1. Servants sin against their masters by irreverent, disrespectful, and saucy carriage towards them, without any respect to the honour which God calls them to give to their masters. Many are disobedient, and will plainly tell, that they will not do what they are bidden ; or if they do it, they will do it in such a manner, as shall vent their pride and passion: Though the scripture commands not to answer again, they will answer, and have the last word too, and by no means will submit to reproofs. Many are unfaithful to their masters, their service is eye-service, unfaithful service, either by their negligence and sloth bringing their master to loss, or by dishonesty in that which is under their hands. Some professing servants are by their way a scandal to religion in families where they are. Others are a plague to the family by the aversion they shew to every good thing or religious duty, as if their masters were no more concerned in them, if they work their work, Eph. v. 5, 6.

2. Masters sin against their servants, not allowing them sufficient maintenance, but niggardly pinching them, keeping



back their wages from them in whole or in part, and so oppressing the hireling; rigorously keeping them at work, not allowing them convenient time for rest, nor worshipping of God in secret, or attending on public ordinances. And so they sin against them by continual chiding, and uneasiness to them, and carelessness with respect to their soul's good, Eph. vi. 9.

*Fourthly*, As to ministers and people:

1. People sin against their ministers by their slighting and despising them, and nowise treating them as the messengers of Christ; going on in their evil ways over the belly of all warnings and reproofs, being stubborn, and refusing subjection to discipline; slandering of them, creating them trouble, by forsaking of ordinances, &c. or any wise making their work burdensome, or them to drive heavily in it; and restraining prayer for them.

Ministers sin against people by an unconcernedness about their souls case, laziness, and unfaithfulness in discharge of their duty, proving stumbling-blocks to their people by a loose walk, and not being earnest in prayer for them, for the blessing of God on them and their message.

As to ruling elders and people, I have nothing to add to what I said before.

*Fifthly*, As to magistrates and subjects:

1. Subjects sin against magistrates by carrying disrespectfully to them, rebelling against them, and disobeying their just laws, reviling and speaking spitefully of them, denying them subjection and their just dues, and not praying for them,

2. Magistrates sin against subjects by using their power to satisfy their lusts, and giving bad example to others, by tyranny and oppression, unjust laws, and discountenancing piety and virtue, and opposing themselves to the kingdom of Christ.

*Sixthly*, As to the aged and younger: How little respect do the younger shew to the aged! Instead of that honour due to age, people are ready to befool them, if not to account them witches or wizards, forgetting that either they must come to their age themselves, or die by the way. On the other hand, few old people carry so to the younger, as to command respect by their exemplary piety and holiness; but,

on the contrary, grey hairs are often found in the way of wickedness.

*Seventhy*, As to the weaker and stronger in gifts: It is often the sin of the weaker to envy the stronger, and if they can to misrepresent them. The weak judge the strong, and the strong despise and stumble the weak.

*Lastly*, Equals sin against one another, undervaluing the worth, envying and grieving at the good of one another, and usurping pre-eminence over one another.

The spring and source of all this is, (1.) Want of love to and fear of God; for while people are not in their duty to God, how should they be in their duty to man? (2.) Pride and selfishness, while every one seeks himself, and not the good of others.

These things may be very humbling to all of us. Who can say his life is clean in any of these relations? But even those who are very dutiful in their several relations as to the matter, may be guilty of the breach of this command, in so far as what they do in these things does not proceed from gracious principles; for indeed the first command must be carried along in all the rest.

III. We come now to the reason annexed to this command; which is, 'A promise of long life and prosperity (as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good) to all such as keep this commandment.'

This is a promise to encourage the conscientious performance of the duties here required. The apostle tells us, that it is 'the first command with promise,' Eph. v. 2.

*Quest.* 1. How is this command the first with promise, seeing the second has a promise also?

*Ans.* It is the first command of the second table: for it is the most weighty of them all, as comprehending all the rest in it; so that we cannot sin against the rest, but we must first break over the hedge of this, which encompasseth all the rest. For one cannot violate another's life, chastity, &c. but he first violates the honour due to him by this command. And it is the only command that has a special promise of a particular mercy annexed to it. The promise annexed to the second command is but a promise of mercy in the general, and that not particularly to those that keep that command, but all the commandments.

*Quest. 2.* But does the law promise any thing but to perfect keeping of its commands? and if so, what are we the better?

*Ans.* We must distinguish betwixt the law as a covenant of works, and the law as in the hand of Christ for a rule of life to believers. As it is a covenant of works, nothing less than perfect obedience can interest men in the promise; for the least failure knocks off the man's fingers from the promise, by virtue of the curse, Gal. iii. 10. 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' So that we can be nothing the better of this promise. But Christ being the Surety of the better covenant, having made a new covenant of grace in his blood, he takes the same law in his hands, and gives out the commands of it as a rule of life to his covenanted people, and renews the promises of it to their sincere obedience of them, 1 Tim. iv. 8. 'Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' As for the curse of it they hear of it no more, he having borne it away himself. And so he crowns the fruits of his own grace in them with blessed rewards. And as all these promises are yea and amen in him; so for his sake, through faith in his blood, they are obtained.

In the words we may consider these three things; the blessing promised, the place where it is to be enjoyed, and the regard the Lord allows his people to have to that blessing to further them in obedience.

FIRST, The blessing promised; that is, long life, *that thy days may be long*. It is a temporal mercy, a mercy much desired ordinarily by all men, and promised to them that keep this commandment. There are four things here to be considered.

*First*, What is meant by men's days being long. It denotes two things.

1. Long life, Prov. iv. 10. 'The years of thy life shall be many.' Death in its best colours has something frightful about it. It is a dissolution of soul and body, which nature shivers at. But there is no eviting of it; all must die; they must go through that dark valley to their eternal state. But the best that can be made of it is promised here, viz. that



such shall be full of days, and not be taken away till they be ripe for the sickle.

2. Prosperity to accompany that life ; for *none vivere, sed va lere, vita est.* Long life in miseries is a continued death, rather than life. So that the nature of the thing teaches us, that a prosperous long life is here promised. It is a good old age, Gen. xv. 15. And thus the apostle explains it, Eph. vi. 3. ‘ That it may be well with thee, and thou mayst live long on the earth.’

*Secondly.* That long life is in itself a mercy, and therefore is promised. There are many things that may mortify men’s desires of long life. Old age is ordinarily accompanied with a train of miseries ; and the longer the godly live, they are the longer kept out of heaven. Yet there are four things that make this long and prosperous life here promised to the godly’s keeping of this command, a great mercy.

1. A good old age is an honourable thing, Prov. xvi. 31: ‘ The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.’ God commands a particular reverence to be given to old men, Lev. xix. 32. ‘ Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man.’ It is true, sin and wickedness spoils the greatest glory, and no man is more like the devil than a wicked old man, Isa. lxv. 20. ‘ The sinner being an hundred years old, shall be accursed.’ But it is an honourable character which the Spirit of God puts on Mnason, Acts xxi. 16. ‘ An old disciple.’ And old godly men are most like God, Dan. vii. 9. Rev. i. 14.

2. It is profitable for the exercise of godliness, in so far as it makes them proof against many temptations which youth often carries men headlong unto, 2 Tim. ii. 22. The frothiness and fire of youth dying out through time, their grace is the better it wants them. Young people’s grace may be more bulky, but old people’s grace, though of less bulk, is more worth, because it is more solid. Though new liquor may work and swell up more, the old is better. John was the longest lived of the apostles, and wrote last of them. In his younger years he could have burnt whole towns for Christ, Luke ix. 54. but if ye will look to his epistles written in his older days, they breathe nothing but love, meekness, and solid godliness.

3. Long life makes way for the more proofs and experi-

ences of the goodness of God on the earth, 1 John ii. 13. The young soldier may be more mettled and venturous; but the old soldier is more to be trusted, because of his experience and skill. It is no small advantage to have been an eye-witness of the several appearances God has made for his church, and of several storms that have gone over her head.

4. *Lastly*, They have the larger opportunity of glorifying God here, and being serviceable in their generation, the longer they live on the earth; and therefore shall have a larger measure of glory hereafter, as they have been more serviceable for God than others, 2 Cor. ix. 6; How many are cut off in their early days, while they were just budding for the honour of God and the service of the church! It is better for themselves that they are soon taken away; but the church is less the better of them, Phil. i. 23, 24; 'The Spirit of God takes notice of this in the old men that outlived Joshua, how useful their age was for God and his church, Josh. xxiv. 31. 'And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that over-lived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord that he had done for Israel.' And though glory is not the merit of good works, yet according to the sowing, so shall the harvest be.

*Thirdly*, A holy walk, particularly in the conscientious performance of relative duties, is the way to a long and prosperous life. Holiness, and particularly relative holiness, is the way to a long and happy life in the world.

1. As to holiness in general, it is clear from two things:

(1.) From the promise of God in his life-giving word. 'Man lives by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' The unbelieving world may think a scripture-promise but a poor fence for a man's life. Give them good entertainment, ease, medicine, they will lay more weight on these than on a cluster of promises; but yet a promise from the Lord is better than all these, Dan. i. 15; for 'man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,' Matth. iv. 4. Now, it has the promise, 1 Tim. iv. 8. It has the promise of health, wealth, and long life, Prov. iii. 7.—10, & 16.

(2.) From the nature of the thing. A holy walk keeps us back from those things that hurt and ruin the body. And no man's body is so little abused to its hurt, as his whose

soul has respect to walk within the hedge of God's precepts. Drunkenness and gluttony devours more than the sword doth. Covetous care and anxiety wastes the body. Inordinate affections are the consuming of the constitution. Holiness, that represses these things, must then be as health to the flesh, Prov. iv. 22.

2. As for dutifulness to our relatives: Consider,

(1.) It hath God's promise for it in the text, which hath been made out to many in their sweet experience, as in the case of Ruth, and that of the Recabites, Jer. xxxv. 19. And so the contrary is threatened, Prov. xxx. 17. 'The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it;' and has been fulfilled in many to the full extent.

(2.) Dutifulness of that sort procures the blessing of relatives; it natively draws out their hearts in thankfulness to God for them, and in prayers to God for them, which under God is a mean to bring down a blessing upon them. The blessing of them that were ready to perish was not in vain to Job; it sprung up in a liberal increase.

(3.) Such persons are of a meek disposition, and such have a peculiar promise to inherit the earth, Matth. v. 6. It is the want of the spirit of meekness, and pride and selfishness in the room of it, that mars relative dutifulness.

4. *Lastly*, The nature of the thing leads to it; for that is the ready way to make relations comfortable; and the comfort that people find in their relatives does good like a medicine, while the contrary is as rottenness in the bones.

There are two objections that lie against this doctrine.

*Object.* 1. Have not wicked men, that cast off all personal and relative holiness, oft-times a long and prosperous life?

*Ans.* It is so indeed. Job observed it long ago, ch. xxi. 7. 'Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?' But there is one thing that makes the difference wide enough; i. e. they have it not by promise. What of that? will ye say. There is very much in it. (1.) He cannot have the comfort of it as a godly man can have, no more than he can have the comfort of a well-furnished house, that knows not but every day he may be turned out of it, while he knows no where else to go to, in comparison of one that has a tack of it, and is to move to a better when



the tack expires. (2.) There is a secret curse in it that destroys and ruins him; so that the morsel may be fair, but there is a bone in it that will stick in his throat, Prov. i. 32, 33. (3.) *Lastly*, The last dish spoils the feast. No man can be said to live a long and happy life, that dies a miserable unhappy death, as all wicked men do. Can that life be prosperous and happy that has such a black hinder end? Does not death soon catch that man, that catches him ere his salvation be secured.

*Object. 2.* Are there not many godly people whose life in the world is neither long nor prosperous, and have neither much health, wealth, nor long life? The answer to this brings us,

*Fourthly*, To shew how this promise is to be understood. It is to be understood, as all other temporal promises are, not absolutely, as if in no case it could be otherwise; but with these two limitations: (1.) As far as it shall serve for God's glory; and God may be more glorified in their early death than their long life. The honour of God is the immoveable rule by which these things must be all measured. (2.) As far as it shall serve for their good; and so it may be a greater mercy to them to be hid in the grave, than to be left on earth; and surely it is no breach of promise to give one what is better than what was promised. And these two are not to be separated, but joined together; for whatever is most for God's honour, is most for the godly man's good.' Now, upon this we may lay down these conclusions.

1. Upon this promise the godly, walking in the way of personal and relative holiness, may confidently expect from God as much long life and prosperity in the world as shall be for the honour of God, and their good to enjoy. And to have any more would be no favour.

2. A short and afflicted life may be more for their good than a long and prosperous one, Psal. cxix. 71. Isa. lvii. 1. And why should men quarrel with their blessings, or cast at their mercies? Good Josiah was soon taken away, because the Lord would not have him to see the evil that was coming on.

3. Many of the children of God may be guilty of such breaches of this command in the mismanagement of their relative duties, that they may, by their own fault, fall short of the mercy promised here in the latter, Psal. xcix. 8; and

so need not wonder if they reap that correction which themselves have sowed. And though others, that have managed worse than they, may escape, no wonder either; for God will let that pass in another, because of an after-reckoning, when he will correct his own children for less, because, that is to put an end to the quarrel.

4. *Lastly*, Whatever they want of this, it shall be made up by what is better. The afflictions of the body shall be health to their souls; their crosses shall not be curses, but blessings; and if they be deprived of the residue of their years here, they shall get them made up in heaven.

SECONDLY, The place where that blessing is to be enjoyed; *in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee*; that is, the land of Canaan. So it respects the Jews. But as it respects Christians, it refers to any place of God's earth; and so the apostle turns it, Eph. vi. 3. 'That thou mayst live long on the earth.'

LASTLY, That regard which the Lord allows his people to have to that blessing, to further them in obedience: *Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee*. Though the chief motive to duty should be the honour and command of God, yet God allows us to eye the promised reward, even in temporal things, as a secondary motive and encouragement to duty.

USE. Let this recommend to us the living in dutifulness to our relatives. This is physic of God's appointment for the sick; it is the way to wealth of God's appointment for them that have little; it is the prolonger of life appointed by the Lord of life to those that would see many days, and these good. And there is no sure way to these where the appointment of God lies cross. Religion is the way to make the world happy. God has linked our duty and our interest together, so as there is no separating of them. Relations are the joints of society; sin has disjointed the world, and so no wonder it be miserable; a relative holiness would set the disjointed world right again.

OF THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

EXOD. XX. 13.—*Thou shalt not kill.*

**T**HE scope of this command is the preservation of that life which God hath given unto man, which is man's greatest concern. No man is lord of his own or his neighbour's life; it belongs to him alone who gave it, to take it away. It is observable, that this and the three following commands are proposed in a word, not because they are of small moment, but because there is more light of nature for them than those proposed at greater length.

This command respects both our own life and the life of our neighbour. That it respects our neighbour, there can be no doubt; and as little needs there to be of its respecting our own. The words are general, agreeing to both; and so the sense of them is, *Thou shalt not kill thyself, nor any other.* He that said to the jailor, 'Do thyself no harm,' taught no other thing than what Moses and the prophets did say. Man is no more lord of his own life than his neighbour's; and he is in hazard of encroaching upon it, as well as that of another; and it is no where guarded, if not here. Nay, the sum of the second table being, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' whereby love to our neighbour is made the measure of love to ourselves, it is evident that it respects our own life in the first place.

As every positive command implies a negative, so every negative implies a positive. Therefore, in so far as God says *Thou shalt not kill*, viz. thyself or others, he thereby obliges men to preserve their own life and that of others. And seeing all the commands agree together, there can be no keeping of one by breaking of another; therefore the positive part of this command is necessary to be determined to lawful endeavours. Hence the answer to that,

*Quest.* 'What is required in the sixth commandment?' is plain, viz. 'The sixth commandment requireth all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life, and the life of others.' The duties of this command may be reduced to



two heads. 1. The preserving of our own life. 2. The preserving the life of others. But both these are to be qualified, so as it be by lawful means and endeavours. For God has given us no such law, as for the keeping of one command we may or must break another. Only there is a great difference betwixt positive and negative precepts; the practice of positive duties may be in some cases intermitted without sin, as a man attacked in time of prayer, or on the Sabbath-day, may lawfully leave the prayer, and external worship of the day, to defend his life, Luke xiv. 5. But never may a man do an ill thing, be it great or little, though it were even to preserve his own life or that of others, Rom. iii. 8. Is it a thing of which God has said, Thou shalt not do so and so? it must never be done, though a thousand lives depended upon it.

Hence it is evident, that a person may not tell a lie, nor do any sinful thing whatever, far less blaspheme, deny Christ or any of his truths, commit adultery or steal, tho' his own life, or the life of others, may be lying upon it. For where the choice is, suffer or sin, God requires and calls us in that case to suffer. And therefore the example of such things in the saints, as in Isaac, Rahab, &c. are no more propounded for our imitation, than David's murder, &c. Peter's denial of Christ, &c. And tho' we read not of reproofs given in some such cases, that will no more infer God's approbation of them than that of Lot's incest, for which we read of no reproof given him. The general law against such things does sufficiently condemn them, in whomsoever they are found.

*Object.* This a hard saying. A man may be in the power of some ruffian, that will require on pain of death some sinful thing; and must one sell his life at such a cheap rate, as to refuse to deny his religion, drink drunk with him, lie, or do any such thing for the time:

*Ans.* It is no more hard than that, Luke xiv. 26. 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' We must love God more than our own or others life, and so must not redeem it by offending God. Sin ruins the soul; therefore says our Lord, Matth. x. 28. 'Fear not them which kill

the body, but are not able to kill the soul : but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.'

*Object.* In the case of martyrdom in the cause of Christ, it is very reasonable ; but that is not the case.

*Ans.* That is a mistake. The case supposed is indeed the case of martyrdom in the cause of Christ. And I confidently aver, that whosoever suffers for the testimony of a good conscience, and because he will not break any one of the commands of God, is as true a martyr for the cause of Christ as he that dies on a gibbet for the maintenance of any of the articles of our creed. Is not holiness the cause of Christ? Has not a man in such a case the cause of martyrdom by the end? does he not lose his life for the sake of Christ? has he not the call to martyrdom, Suffer or Sin? may he not look for the martyrs reward? And if he redeem life by sinning, falls he not under the same fearful doom, as in that case, Matth. x. 39. 'He that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it,' Mark viii. 38. 'Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.' Are not the ten commands Christ's words, as well as the articles of faith; Whatever difference may be betwixt these cases, an impartial consideration will manifest the case supposed is a greater trial of faith than the other. And God will surely make up to these secret unknown martyrs at the day of judgment, the honour which the open and manifest martyrs have beforehand.

In discoursing further from this subject, I shall shew,

I. What is required in this command.

II. What is forbidden in it.

I. I am to shew, what is required in this command. It requires, as I said before, 'All lawful endeavours to preserve our own life, or the life of others.'

FIRST, It requires, that, by all lawful endeavours, we preserve our own lives. Self-preservation is the leading duty of this command. Brute creatures have a natural instinct for it. Our kind God has given man a written law for it,

whereby it may appear that we are dearer to our God than to ourselves. We may take up this in two things.

FIRST, Thou must preserve the life of thine own soul. When God says, *Thou shalt not kill*, doth he only take care for the body? No; doubtless of the soul too. He looks not to the cabinet only, overlooking the jewel. The soul is the man, at least the best and most precious part of him. Two things here are in general required.

1. The careful avoiding of all sin, which is the destruction of the soul, Prov. xi. 19. It is by sin that men wrong their own souls; whereby they wound them, fill them with poisonous things, and prepare the way for their eternal death, Prov. viii. ult.

2. The careful using of all means of grace and holy exercises, for the begetting, preserving, and promoting spiritual life, 1 Pet. ii. 2. As we must eat and drink for the life of our bodies, so must we use these for the life of our souls; eating Christ's body, and drinking Christ's blood, by faith, drinking in his word. The soul has its sickness, decays, &c. as well as the body. Let it not pine away, but nourish it.

SECONDLY, Thou must by all lawful endeavours preserve the life of thine own body. We may take up this in these three things.

1. Just self-defence against violence offered unto us by others unjustly, Luke xxii. 36. So a man ought to defend himself, if he can, against thieves or robbers; and therefore it is said 'If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him,' Exod. xxii. 2. Yet this must be only in the case of necessity, where the violence cannot be escaped but by a violent repelling it; for all violent courses must be the last remedy, Luke vi. 29. Where a soft reception will still the violence offered, it is not the spirit of Christ, but of Satan, that repels violence with violence. And when it is necessary, no greater violence may be offered than what is necessary to repel the attack, Exod. ii. 2, 31.

2. Furnishing our bodies with whatever is necessary for their health and welfare, according to our ability; taking the moderate use of the means of health and life unto ourselves, Eph. v. 29. for in so far as we use not the means of preserving them, we are guilty of destroying them. Therefore it is our duty to allow ourselves a competent portion



of meat and drink, wholesome food, as the Lord lays to our hands; to provide competent housing and clothing, to refresh our bodies with a competent measure of rest and sleep; to use moderate labour, exercise and recreations, and medicine for the removal of distempers. The use of these is necessary, and the immoderate use of them hurtful; therefore the moderate and temperate use of them is our duty.

3. Keeping our affections regular, subduing all inordinate and evil affections; for these are destructive to the body as well as to the soul. So that a patient disposition, a quiet mind, and a contented and cheerful spirit are duties of this command, as necessary for the welfare of our bodies; whereas inordinate passions are the ruin of them, Prov. xvii. 22. 'A merry heart doth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.'

SECONDLY, This command requires, that by all lawful endeavours we preserve the life of our neighbours. We may also take up this in two things.

FIRST, We must endeavour to preserve the life of their souls.

1. By giving them the example of a holy life, for that edifies and builds up, Matth. v. 16; whereas a scandalous walk is a soul-murdering practice.

2. By instructing, warning, reproving, and admonishing them as we have opportunity, where the case of their sin requires it, Jude 23; and comforting them in distress, 1 Thess. v. 16; and praying for them, Gen. xliii. 29. No man must say with Cain, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' We are required to watch over one another. If our neighbour's ox or his ass fall into the ditch, we must also help them out: how much more when his soul is in hazard of falling into hell?

SECONDLY, We must by all lawful endeavours preserve the life of our neighbour's body. Here God requires of us,

1. To protect and defend the innocent against unjust violence, according to every one's power, as they have a fair call to exercise the same, whether it be in respect of their name, goods, or life, Psal. lxxxii. 3, 4. Prov. xxiv. 11, 12. And so it is a duty of this command to repress tyranny, whereof we have commended example in the interposition of the people to save the life of Jonathan, 1 Sam. xiv. 45.

‘And the people said unto Saul, shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.’

2. To give unto others the necessities of life, when in want, according to our ability. For as he that feeds not the fire puts it out, so unmerciful people that shut up their bowels from the needy, are guilty of their blood before the Lord, Jam. ii. 15, 16.

3. To entertain such affections towards our neighbour, as may keep us back from injuring of him, and him from doing harm to himself; such as, charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness. These are as water to quench fire in us which may burn up others, and as oil unto others to refresh them, Eph. iv. ult.

4. A peaceable, mild, and courteous conversation, Prov. xv. 1. in looks, speech, and behaviour.

5. *Lastly*, With respect to injuries, we ought to take all things in the best sense, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. 7. to avoid all occasions of strife, yea, even to part sometimes with our right for peace, as Abraham with Lot; to bear real injuries, Col. iii. 12, 13; to forbear, and be ready to be reconciled, and forgive injuries, yea, to requite good for evil, Matth. v. 44.

With respect to both our own life and the life of others, we are called to resist all thoughts, subdue all passions, avoid all occasions, temptations, and practices tending to the destruction of our own life, or that of others of soul or body.

Who can understand his errors? What shall come of us, if God enter into judgment with us? Our omissions would ruin us, even in those things where we judge ourselves to be in the least hazard.

II. I come now to shew, what is forbidden in the sixth commandment. It forbids ‘the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbour, unjustly, and whatsoever tendeth thereunto.’

Here I shall consider this command as relating to our life, and the life of our neighbour.

FIRST, I shall consider this command as relating to our

own life ; and that, 1. With respect to our souls ; and, 2. With respect to our bodies.

FIRST, Thou shalt not kill thine own soul. Our kind God forbids us to be self murderers and soul murderers. We become guilty of the blood of our own souls these ways :

1. By neglecting of the means of grace and salvation, Prov. viii. 34. 36. The life of our souls is a flame that must be kindled from above, and fed by means of grace. Whoso then neglect them, are guilty of their own blood. Consider this, ye prayerless persons, ye that are at no pains to get knowledge, slighers of public ordinances, private duties, reading, meditation, &c.

2. By opposing and fighting against the Lord's quickening work in the soul. They that murder convictions, murder their own souls, as if they were resolved that they should never stir in them, Prov. xxix. 1. Some, with Felix, put them off with fair promises ; some, with Cain, with the noise of axes and hammers ; which is in effect, they will not let their souls recover.

3. By continuing in sin impenitent. God calls by his word and providence to the man, as Paul to the jailor. ' Do thyself no harm.' But, as if he were resolute on his own ruin, he will not forbear these courses. Wilful impenitency is the grossest self-murder, because soul-murder, Ezek. xviii. 30, 31. His soul is standing under a decayed roof, tell him that it will fall on him ; but he will not stir a foot ; is not his blood then on his own head ?

4. By unbelief, and not coming to Christ by faith, John v. 40. Many means are essayed to preserve the soul ; but still it is ruined, because the main cure is neglected. Let a man use ever so many remedies for his health, if he will not use the main cure necessary, he is his own murderer. So resolutions, watchings, engagements, are tried ; but if faith, and employing of Christ for sanctification, is not tried, he is still a murderer.

O sirs, consider this. Murder, self-murder, soul-murder, is a crying sin. What wonder the man perish who will perish ? Will God spare the shedding of the blood of that soul, which the man himself is so liberal of ?

And hence see that people not only may, but this command of God obliges them to seek the welfare and good of



their souls. Fear hell, hope for heaven; and let this stir you up to duty : but do not rest there, go forward and make the love of God your main motive ; and that of itself would be sufficient to stir you up to all the duties of a holy life.

SECONDLY, Thou shalt not kill thine own body. This is simply and absolutely forbidden. We may take away the life of others in some cases justly ; but in no case our own, unless there be a particular divine warrant, which I suppose in Samson's case, which is not to be expected by us ; for, therein he was a type of Christ. There are two things forbidden here.

1. The taking away of our own life, by laying violent hands on ourselves. This is the horrid sin of direct self-murder ; of which Saul, Ahithophel, and Judas were guilty ; and many sad instances have been of it of late. The law of God utterly condemns it, and nature itself abhors it. It is the effect of a desperate envenomed spirit, rising from pride and impatience, a horrible leaping into eternity ere the call come from God. It is highly dishonourable to God, charging him with cruelty, and refusing to wait his leisure. It is the thing the grand murderer is seeking. Civil laws strike against it ; with us self-murderers are denied Christian burial, their goods are escheated, that respect to their families may deter people from it : in other places they have hung them up on gibbets. And though we will not take on us to determine the case of all such to be hopeless for eternity, that is sufficient to scare us, 1 John iii. 5. ' Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.'

2. Doing any thing that tendeth thereunto. Men may be guilty of killing themselves indirectly many ways, all which are here forbidden. Here are forbidden, as tending to the murder of the body.

1st, All entertaining of any thoughts against our own life, that is heart-killing ; wearying of our own life, and fretful wishing to be gone, as was Jonah's case, chap. iv. 3 ; all tampering with temptations of that sort, and not rejecting them with abhorrence, Job. vii. 15. Our life is a mercy, and not to be wearied off fretfully ; for it is God's goodness that we are out of hell. And it is horrid ingratitude to account God's gift a burden.

2dly, Discontent, fretfulness, and impatience. It is a dangerous thing, Psal. xxxvii. 8. It was that which prevailed

with Ahithophel to make away with himself. It is like ink cast into a fountain, which makes all the water blackish. It unfits for society with men, and for communion with God; it destroys the soul and body too; for the fretful man is his own tormentor. We should study to be content with our lot, and easy whatever our circumstances be, Heb. xiii. 5; and that will set all our wrongs right, Prov. xv. 15; for then our spirit is brought to our lot; and the vulture preys no more on our liver.

*3dly*, Immoderate grief and sorrow. When we go into the waters of godly sorrow for sin, we are out again ere we are well in; but in carnal sorrow we will go over the head and ears, 2 Cor. vii. 10. How many have conceived that sorrow upon some cross which they have met with! something within their fancy has been balked, that has ruined their bodies as well as their souls. We should enure ourselves to a patient bearing of the Lord's hand; and not smother that fire within our breasts, but lay it out before the Lord and leave it there, 1 Sam. i. 18. and labour to please God and consult our own welfare by a holy and moderate cheerfulness, Prov. xvii. 22.

*4thly*, Anxiety, distracting carking cares about the things of this life. As men fearing that they shall not sleep, do thereby mar their own rest; so the body is often ruined by too much anxiety for it, Matth. vi. 31. 'Take no thought what ye shall eat, &c.' *Gr.* 'Rack not your mind.' When the mind is on the tenter-hooks, the body must smart for it. As the ape kills its fondling by hugging it, so do men kill themselves by indulging anxious cares. Let us labour then for a holy carelessness in these matters; let us use lawful means, and leave the success quietly on the Lord. Though anxiety will not add a cubit to our stature, it may through time take a cubit from it, Phil. iv. 6.

*5thly*, Neglecting of our bodies, Col. ii. 23. when we do not make a convenient use of the means of life and health; as when people deny themselves the necessary measure of food, sleep, exercise, recreations, physic, clothes, and housing. People may be guilty against their own lives this way, (1.) By a careless negligent disposition, Eccl. x. 18. (2.) From the plague of a covetous pinching humour, that they cannot find in their heart to use the gift of God to them, Eccl. vi. 2. (3.) By means of inordinate passions, 1 Kings

xxi. 4. (4.) Sometimes Satan has driven people under conviction to this, suggesting to them that they have no right to these things. But as long as men live, though they have not a covenant-right, they have a common providential right to the means of life; and the command binds, *Thou shalt not kill*. It is a duty of this command, then, to take care of our bodies and provide them necessities so far as we can: they are not ours, but God's.

6thly, Intemperance, when people keep no measure in satisfying of the flesh, Luke xxi. 34. They pamper the flesh, till the beast turns furious, and ruins itself. When God made man, he impressed an image of his sovereignty on him, made him lord over the beasts; but now, without the beasts, and within the affections, are turned rebels. This is a monster with three heads.

(1.) Gluttony, intemperance in eating. Man should eat to live; but some, like the beasts live to eat. The law of God will not allow people to cram their bellies, and sacrifice to a greedy appetite, Phil. iii. 19. It is a degree of self-murder; for it cuts short people's days, which sobriety would prolong. There is a curse entailed upon it, which is often seen to take effect, Prov. xxiii. 20, 21. 'Be not amongst wine-bibers; amongst riotous eaters of flesh. For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.' The glutton and the drunkard, in scripture-language, is equivalent to a ne'er-do-well in ours, Deut. xxi. 20, 21. It is a beastly sin. A heathen calls the glutton's belly a swines trough. A scavenger, whose occupation is to empty, is to be preferred to the glutton, who lives to fill a privy.

(2.) Drunkenness, intemperance in drinking, Luke xxi. 34. A sin that makes quick work for the grave, and has carried many thither ere they have lived half their days. Reason differences men from beasts, but the beastly sin of drunkenness takes away that, robbing men of reason. It is the devil's rack, on which while he has men, they will babble out every thing; for *quod in corde sobrii, in ore ebrii*. It is an inlet to other sins: for what will a man not do in his drunkenness, if he have a temptation to it? It destroys a man's health, wealth and soul; murders soul and body at once. The Lacedæmonians used to fill their slaves drunk, that their children, seeing the picture of drunkenness might loath it.



We have the picture of it, Prov. xxiii. 29, &c. (1.) It embroils men in quarrels ‘Who hath wo? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions?’ Many have wo and sorrow that cannot help it; but drunkards wilfully create them to themselves. When drink is in, wit is out. Thence proceed drunken scuffles; *babling* in scurrilous language; and from words they go to blows, *wounds without cause*. (2.) It ruins their bodies; *redness of eyes*, a sign of inward inflammation, through drink and watching, not through weeping and praying. (3.) It exposes them to uncleanness, ver. 33. ‘Thine eyes shall behold strange women.’ (4.) It makes their tongues ramble, speak contrary to religion, reason, common civility, yea, nonsense. (5.) It besots them; it makes their heads giddy, and they are fearless of danger, ver. 34. ‘Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.’ (6.) *Lastly*, It is a bewitching sin. The man sees the ill of it, but his heart is hardened, he has no power to leave it, ver. 35. ‘They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not. when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.’ The curse of God is entailed on it, Isa. xxviii. 1, 2, 3, ‘Wo to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine. Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under feet.’

(3.) Intemperance in any other sensual pleasure, Luke viii. 14. The pleasures of the senses are often chains to the soul, and scourges to the body; and intemperance in them will make them so. Too much pleasing the body may make mourning at last, Prov. v. 11. A man may sin against God and his own body in the intemperate use of any sensual pleasure whatsoever, though in itself lawful; and no doubt much guilt is contracted in the intemperate use of tobacco, and such like things, 1 Cor. vi. 12.

*7thly*, Immoderate labour and painfulness, Eccl. ii. 22, 23. Labour and exercise in moderation is like a sober wind that purifies the air, and is good for the body and soul too: but

immoderate labour and exercise is like a violent wind that throws down the house, and plucks up the tree by the roots.

*Lastly*, Exposing of ourselves to unnecessary hazards, Matth. iv. 7. To put ourselves in hazard where we have no call, is to sin against God and ourselves. And in this case, God desires mercy, and not sacrifice.

SECONDLY, We will consider this command as relating to our neighbour's life.

FIRST, Thou shalt not kill thy neighbour's soul. It is sin that is the killing thing both to our own and our neighbour's soul. And there are several ways how men fall into this guilt of murdering the souls of others. As,

1. By giving them an example of sin. God forbade to lay a stumbling-block before the blind; but the world is filled with these, and so ruined, Matth. xviii. 7. Men do ill things, and think that if they do ill, it is but to themselves. No; but thereby thou dost what lies in thee to ruin others.

Yea, example is not only ruining to others in evil things, but also, (1.) In doing what has the appearance of evil: therefore we should take heed to that, because others may take the appearance for reality, and so be ruined by us. (2.) By an uncharitable use of our Christian liberty in things indifferent. Thus the strong may ruin the weak, Rom. xiv. 15.

2. By co-operating directly to the sin of our neighbour, which is indeed the lending our destroying hand to ruin his soul, whereby his blood comes to be charged on us. It is the putting a cup of poison in his hand to dispatch himself, and a reaching of the sword to the madman, which whoso do are accessory to his death. Thus men are guilty,

1st, By commanding others to sin, as Jeroboam made Israel to sin. So magistrates by sinful laws, and all superiors whatsoever, when they use their authority to oblige another to an ill thing; or whosoever commands another to do what is sinful.

2dly, By counselling others, to it, or advising them in it. The world is full of these murderers. So that, where a person is under temptation, there is often at hand one like Jonadab to give counsel to some ill course, 2 Sam. xiii. 5. Such counsel often has the force of a command. So drunkards murder one another's souls, Hab. ii. 15.

3dly, By joining with others in sin, Psal. l. 18. Going

alongst with others in their sin, ruins not only ourselves, but them too.

*4thly*, By provoking others to sin, 1 Kings xxi. 25 Thus people are many ways guilty, by a provoking carriage, by provoking words; and not a few so devilish that they take a pleasure to provoke others, that they may get something to laugh at. These are like them who stir up the fire to burn another's house, that they may warm themselves at it.

*5thly*, By soliciting and downright tempting to sin. Such agents the devil has in the world, who make it their business to draw others to sin, by an ensnaring carriage or plain words; so that it is evident they are gone out on the devil's errant, Prov. vii. 18.

*6thly*, By teaching of sin. When men call truth a lie, and lies truth, when they give out a sinful practice to be duty, and a duty to be a sinful practice, they contribute directly to the sin of others, and bring that woe on themselves, Isa. v. 20. 'Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.'

By all these, two fall at once; for the sin of him that commands, counsels &c. does not excuse the other.

(1.) By consenting to the sin of others, countenancing them in it, and encouraging them in their sin, Acts ix. 1. We may countenance sinners in their duty, but by no means in their sin. These two are very different, but they are often confounded; and the confounding of them is the cause of much disorder in our church at this day.

3. By neglecting what we owe to our neighbour for the welfare of his soul. In not doing what we ought to preserve or recover his soul, we are guilty of destroying it, and so indirectly operate to his sin. As,

*1st*, By neglecting the means for preventing of sin in others, Ezek. iii. 18. When people do not teach, warn, and admonish, those whom they see to be in hazard, or generally neglect to restrain sin by all lawful means competent to them. Thus Eli sinned, 1 Sam. iii. 13. 'His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.' Thus much guilt is contracted by ministers, magistrates, husbands and wives, parents, masters, &c.

*2dly*, By neglecting the means to recover those that have fallen into sin; suffering sin to lie on them, and not reprov-



ing it, Lev. xix. 17; compare 1 John iii. 15; or reproving of them so imprudently, passionately, or weakly, as that it can do them no good. So did Eli.

*3dly*, By not compassionating the sinner, and mourning over his sin before the Lord, but hardening our hearts against him, and being careless what come of his soul, Ezek. ix. 4. O what guilt is contracted this way in shutting up our bowels of compassion! How many will exclaim against the sins of others, whose consciences witness that they never had a sore heart for the dishonour done to God, and the ill to the sinner's soul by it.

*4thly*, By being pleased with their sin. This is in effect to be pleased with their ruin, Rom. i. ult. Thus men are guilty,

(1.) By approving the sin of others, Psal. xlix. 13. This is to set our stamp on an evil way, that it may pass current.

(2.) By rejoicing at it, and making a jest of it. It is devilish mirth that riseth from our neighbour's ruining himself. Yet much of this guilt is in the world, Prov. xiv. 9.

SECONDLY, Thou shalt not kill thy neighbour's body unjustly. There are three cases wherein the life of our neighbour may be taken away justly. (1.) In the case of public justice, Gen. ix. 6. (2.) Of lawful war, Judg. v. 23. (3.) Of necessary self-defence, Exod. xxii. 2, 3. The reason is, because in these cases a man does not take, but God, the Lord of life and death, puts the sword in his hand; so that judgment in these cases is the Lord's. Unless in these cases, it is murder, an unjust taking away another's life. Now, there are two things here forbidden with respect to this.

*First*, The taking away of our neighbour's life unjustly. This is actual and direct murder. This was the sin of Cain, This is a horrible and atrocious crime, for which men's laws condemn the guilty to the gallows, and God's laws condemn them to hell, 1 John iii. 15. A sin so flat against nature, that even a natural conscience uses to kindle a hell in the bosom of the murderer; and a crime it is which Providence specially watches to bring to light. This is to be extended not only to what is commonly reckoned murder, but to these three cases.

1. The taking away of men's lives, under colour of law, and forms of justice, when the law is unjust, and there is no real crime; as in the case of Naboth, 1 Kings xxi. 12, 13,

19. And therefore all the laws of the world will not free persecutors from the guilt of murder, in their taking away the lives of the martyrs.

2. The taking away of men's lives in an unjust war, Hab. ii. 12. For in such a case an army is but a company of robbers and murderers, before the Lord; seeing God puts not the sword in men's hands in an unjust cause.

3. The taking away of a man's life in a set duel or combat, which, whether it fall in the hand of him that gives the challenge, or his that accepts it, is downright murder. There is not the least sort of approbation thereof in the scriptures. And therefore the laws of duelling, like the laws of drinking, are not given by God, but by the devil. David's combating Goliath was by public authority, in a public cause, and besides, from an extraordinary impulse of the Spirit. Duelling is from the devil, as being the effect of pride and rage; a taking into men's heads the disposing of that life which God only is Lord of; it is an usurping of the magistrate's sword, and invading God's right of vengeance, Rom. xii. 19; And the pretence of honour, the usual plea for duels, is as far different from God's laws of honour, as hell is from heaven, Prov. xvi. 32. Matth. v. 44.

*Secondly*, Whatsoever tendeth to the taking away of our neighbour's life unjustly. This is virtual, interpretative, indirect murder. It is of several sorts, all here forbidden.

1. There is heart-murder; and of that there are several sorts.

1st, Carnal anger and wrath, which is rash, causeless, and excessive, Matth. v. 22. Some people's anger is like a fire in straw, soon blown up and soon out; others like a fire in iron, once kindled, which it is hard to get laid. But of whatever sort it is, it is a short madness; and the longer it is kept, it is so much the worse, Eph. iv. 26, 27. 'It resteth in the bosom of fools.' All murder begins here. It is a fire that kindles the anger of God, and of our neighbour, against us, and so casts all into confusion. Let us study meekness; which is what will make us like to Christ, Col. iii. 12.

2dly, Envy, whereby people grieve and grudge at the good of others. It is the devil's two-edged sword drawn to slay two at once; the envious himself, Prov. xiv. 30; for he is like a serpent gnawing its own tail, Job v. 2; and the

party envied, Prov. xxvii. 4. While other sins are entertained for pleasure or profit, this is like a barren field, bringing forth only briars and thorns; there is not a dram of any sort of pleasure in it. But this was it that put Joseph's brethren on a murdering design. A charitable frame of spirit is our duty, Rom. xii. 15.

*3dly*, Hatred and malice against our neighbour. This made Cain imbrue his hands in his brother's blood. And such as live in malice and hatred go in his way, 1 John iii. 15. It is the sad character of persons estranged from God, that they are 'hateful, and hating one another,' Tit. iii. 3. But of all hatred, that is the worst which hates good men for their goodness. However, we may hate every man's faults, but no man's person. 'Love thy neighbour as thyself,' is the express command of heaven.

*4thly*, Revengeful thoughts and desires; which are so much the worse as they are the longer entertained, Rom. xii. 19. That heart is a bloody heart that longs for a heart-sight, as they call it, on those that have wronged them. God sees the most secret wish of ill to our neighbour, and will call us to an account. Let us learn long-suffering and patience, to forgive, a disposition and readiness to be reconciled; otherwise our addresses to Heaven for pardon will be vain, Matth. iv. 15.

*5thly*, Rejoicing at the mischief that befalls others, Prov. xxiv. 17, 18. Nothing makes men liker the devil than that murdering disposition to make the ruin of others our mirth, and their sorrow our joy; for man's sin and misery is what affords pleasure to the devil. We should sympathize and weep with them that weep, as well as rejoice with those that do rejoice.

*Lastly*, Cruelty, an horrid unrelenting disposition, that is not affected with the misery of others, but carries it on, and adds to it with delight. A disposition most inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel, that teaches tender heartedness even to the very beasts, Prov. xii. 10. But those that delight in cruel treating of these, want but an opportunity to exercise it on men.

2. There is tongue-murder. Solomon observes, that the tongue, however little a member it is, is the lord of life and death, Prov. xviii. 21. and xxi. 23. If it be not well managed, then, no wonder it be sometimes found guilty of



murder. The natural shape of the tongue resembles a flame of fire, and therefore in Hebrew one word signifies a flame and the tongue ; yea, and it is what it seems to be, ‘ a fire, a world of iniquity,’ Jam. iii. 6. It resembles also a sword, and so it is oft-times, lvii. 4. and Psal. lix. 7. The mouth and tongue resemble bow and arrow, and so they are, Psal. lxiv. 3. The rage of an ill tongue must needs be dangerous, then, seeing such an one lays about him with his bow and arrow, and advances with fire and sword, which must needs bring him in blood-guilty. Now, this sword devours several ways.

*1st*, By quarrelling, provoking, and contentious speeches, Prov. xxiii. 29. Such words have oft-times begun a plea that has ended in blood. And therefore the apostle compares such to beasts, that begin to snarl and bite one another, till it end in the ruin of either or both, Gal. v. 15. Let us make conscience, then, of peaceable, mild, and gentle speeches.

*2dly*, By bitter words. These are the im poisoned arrows that tongue-murderers shoot at their neighbour, Psal. lxiv 3. 4. Their tongue are dipt in gall, and they pierce to the heart, and give a home-thrust like a sword, Prov. xii. 28. They become not the disciples of the meek Jesus. Lay aside these as ye would not be reckoned murderers in the sight of God, Eph. iv. 31.

*3dly*, By railing and scolding. This was Shimei’s murdering deed, 2 Sam. xvi. 5, 6, 7. for which he died as a murderer in Solomon’s days. Thus men and women manage their tongue-battles with eagerness, making their doors or the town-gate the field of battle, where words pierce like swords to the heart. These are the plagues and the pests of society, whose bloody mouths proclaim their hearts fearless of God. Hear ye what the Lord says, 1 Pet. iii. 9. ‘ Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing : but contrariwise, blessing ; knowing that ye are thereunto called ; that ye should inherit a blessing.’

*4thly*, By reviling, reproachful, and disdainful speeches. Men think little of these ; they are but words, and words are but wind. But they are a wind that will blow people to hell, Matth. v. 22. They are the devil’s bellows to blow up the fire of anger ; which may make fearful havock ere it be quenched, Prov. xv. 1.

*5thly*, By mocking scoffing, and deriding speeches. These are reckoned among the sufferings of the martyrs, Heb. xi. 36. 'Others had trial of cruel mockings.' The soldiers mocking of Christ, John xix. 3. is compared to the baiting by dogs, Psal. xxii. 16. See how children paid for this usage to the prophet Elisha, 2 Kings ii. 23, 24.

*Lastly*, By cursings, imprecations, and wrathful wishings of ill and mischief to our neighbour's; which is but throwing up of hellish fire on others, that comes down and burns up him that threw it, Psal. cix. 18.

3. There is eye murder, which vents itself by a wrathful countenance, and all gestures of that kind, such as high and proud looks, and fierce looks, Prov. vi. 17. The spirit of God takes notice of Cain's countenance, Gen. iv. 5. As there is adultery in looks, so there may be murder in them, not only angry looks, but looks of satisfaction on the miseries of others, which God knows the meaning of, Obad. 12. gnashing with the teeth, and all such gestures of a person, denoting a heart boiling with wrath and revenge, Acts vii. 54.

4. There is hand-murder, even where death killeth not. And people may be guilty of this two ways.

*1st*, By way of omission, when we with-hold and give not help to those that are in distress, to save their life or living, Judg. v. 2, 3. neglecting the sick, not visiting and helping them as need requires, Luke x. 31, 32. not affording means of life to the poor in want, Jam. ii. 15, 16. for those put out the flame of life that do not feed it. We should then put on bowels of mercy and charity, in imitation of Job, chap. xxxi. 16. &c. It is observable, that the sentence against the wicked runs on unmercifulness to the poor members of Christ, Matth. xxv. 41, &c.

*2dly*, By way of commission. And so men are guilty,

(1.) As they strike against the living of others, their means and way of subsistence. This goes under the general name of oppression, a crying sin, Ezek. xxii. 7. Thus this command is broken by extortion, landlords racking of their lands so as labourers cannot live on them, tenants taking others lands over their heads, sometimes to the ruin of honest families, masters not allowing servants whereupon to live; and, generally, by all kind of oppression, which in God's account is murder, Isa. iii. 14, 15. Micah. iii. 3.

(2.) As they strike against the body and life itself, Thus men are guilty, by fighting, striking, and wounding others, Exod. xxi. 18, 22. How many have been guilty as murderers in the sight of men, that have had no design to go the full length, when they fell to fighting?

Persecution is a complication of all these; and therefore the better the cause is, the worse is the deed. It is a main engine of him who was a murderer from the beginning. And God will reckon with them as murderers at the great day, Mat. xxv. 41, 42, &c.

*Lastly*, Men may be guilty of the blood of others otherwise. As,

(1.) By sinful occasioning in others those things whereby our neighbour sins against his own soul, *Quod est causa causæ, est etiam causa causæ*. So people sin by occasioning in others discontent, fretfulness, immoderate sorrow, &c. 1 Sam. i. 6. Wherefore we should beware of that, as we would not be guilty of their blood.

(2.) By all the ways we said men co-operate to the destroying of other souls, they may be guilty of killing others bodies; as by commanding, counselling, or anywise procuring the taking away of men's living or lives unjustly. So David murdered Uriah by the sword of the Ammonites. So informers against the Lord's people in time of persecution are murderers in God's sight, Ezek. xxii. 9. Yea, the approving, or any way consenting to it, makes men guilty, Acts viii. 1.

Now, Sirs, examine yourselves in this matter; and who will not be brought in blood-guilty, guilty of their own and their neighbour's blood, the blood of their souls and bodies! God's law is spiritual, and sees the guilt of blood where we plead Not guilty. Let us be humbled and convinced, and apply to the blood of Christ, that we may be washed from it.



## OF THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

EXOD. xx. 14.—*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

THE scope of this command is the preservation of our own and our neighbours chastity and purity. God is a holy God, and the devil is an unclean spirit : we must therefore study purity in all manner of conversation. Our Lord puts this command before the sixth, Mark x. 19. because our chastity should be as dear to us as our life, and we should be as much afraid of that which defiles the body as that which destroys it.

This command is a negative precept, and expressly forbids adultery : but under that is comprehended all manner of uncleanness whatsoever, with all the causes and occasions leading thereunto. And the positive part of this command is, that we must preserve our own and our neighbour's chastity by all due means.

In discoursing further, I shall consider,

- I. The duties required in this command.
- II. The sins forbidden therein.
- III. Make some practical improvement.

I. Our first business is to consider what is required in this command ; and the Catechism, agreeably to holy scripture, tells us, that it requires ‘ the preservation of our own and our neighbour's chastity in heart, speech, and behaviour.’

The duties of this command may therefore be reduced to two general heads. 1. The preservation of our own chastity. 2. The preservation of that of our neighbour.

FIRST, This command requires us to preserve our own chastity and purity. There is a twofold chastity. 1. In single life ; when it is led in purity, it is like the angelical ; when in impurity, it is devilish. 2. There is conjugal chastity, when married persons keep themselves within the bounds of the law of that state. This lies in two things. (1.) With respect to all others, keeping themselves pure and uncorrupted.

(2.) With respect to another, keeping themselves within the bounds of Christian sobriety and moderation. In whatsoever state we are, 'this is the will of God, even our sanctification, that we should abstain from fornication; that every one of us should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence,' 1 Thess. iv. 3, 4, 5.

Now, there is a threefold chastity required of us, and to be preserved by us.

*First*, Chastity in heart, 1 Thess. iv. 5. forecited. God knows the heart, and therefore his laws reach the heart, and he will judge for heart-sins. We must keep our minds pure, that the thoughts be not led astray and corrupted. Hence Job 'made a covenant with his eyes,' chap. xxxi. 1. And we must keep our affections pure, that they be not vitiated. Job saw this when he appeals to God, 'If mine heart have been deceived by a woman,' ver. 9. This is to be pure before God, who seeth in secret, and searcheth the hidden things of darkness. The least glance of the heart over this hedge is a crime.

*Secondly*, Chastity of speech, Col. iv. 6. 'Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.' As there is tongue-murder, there is tongue-adultery. But our speeches must savour of sobriety and purity: and so they will, if the heart be pure; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The Holy Ghost, in the scriptures, gives us a pattern to be imitated in our speeches concerning those things that have a natural turpitude with them, vailing the same in modest expressions.

*Thirdly*, Chastity in behaviour, which comprehends both the keeping of the body undefiled by any gross act, and a modest carriage every way, 1 Pet. iii. 2. Modesty must appear in the whole of our behaviour, that the purity of the heart may shine forth thereby, as the candle gives light through the lanthorn.

Now, as this threefold chastity is required here, so the proper means for preserving it are also required.

1. Watching over our senses. These are the ports at which Satan breaks in, and ruins people's purity. The heart and the senses are like a candle-wick, at the end of which lies a heap of powder. Object sets fire to the senses

at the wick, and these carry it along to the heart where the corruption lies as a heap of powder. Particularly,

(1.) The eyes, Job xxxi. 1. These were the gates at which sin first entered into the world; and these have been the gates of destruction to many, whereby their fame, body, and souls, have been destroyed together. It is remarkable that the Sodomites were smitten with blindness, who took so little care to watch their eyes while they had the use of them. Curious glances of the eye have been fatal to many, as to David, 2 Sam. xi. 2. and to Joseph's mistress, Gen. xxxix. 7.

(2.) The ears. The corruption of the heart makes people liable to be chained with Satan's fetters by the ears as well as the eyes; as appears from Prov. vii. 21, 22. 'With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks.' And curious listening to rotten speeches, or whatsoever has a tendency to corrupt the heart is to open the door to let out our purity.

2. Temperance, a sober use of meat, drink, sleep, and recreations. Hence our Lord warns his disciples, Luke xxi. 34. 'Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness.' Temperance is a necessary hedge for chastity, and the breaking over that hedge is a near way to sacrifice the other. See Acts xxiv. 24, 25. 'And, after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.—And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.' Why did the apostle chuse that subject before these great persons? Why, truly it was very fit. Historians tell us, that this Drusilla was a most libidinous woman, and had left her husband, Aziz king of Emenessa; and while he was yet living, she was married to Felix, who was taken with her beauty; and so they lived together in adultery. The body being pampered becomes a luxuriant beast; and those that cram their bellies with meat or drink, are but one remove from, and in near disposition to filthiness; for one sensuality makes way for another.

On this account it is that fasting and prayer may be to people a duty of this command; for, as some devils are not



cast out, so some are not held out but by fasting and prayer. They that would keep themselves pure, must have their bodies in subjection, and that may require, in some cases, a holy violence, 1 Cor. ix. 27.

3. Keeping of chaste and modest company. Hence Solomon exhorts, Prov. v. 8, 9. 'Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel.' How many have been ruined by the company they have fallen into, worse then they had fallen into a den of lions and wolves? Ill company wears off insensibly the impressions of virtue on people's spirits; and if they be not at war with them, the maintaining of peace and converse will make people like them.

Being busied in some honest employment. Those that would be virtuous indeed, must not eat the bread of idleness. Honest labour and business cuts off many temptations that idle persons are liable to. Had David been in the field with his army, when he was rising from off his bed in the evening-tide, 2 Sam. xi. 2. he had preserved his chastity when he lost it, and so had Dinah, if she had been at her business in her father's house, when she went out to see the daughters of the land, Gen. xxxiv. 1.

5. Marriage, by those that have not the gift of continency. Hence says the apostle, 1 Cor. vii. 2, 9. 'To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.'—Neither marriage nor single life are in themselves morally good or evil, but indifferent. But that state of life is to be chosen by every one, that will most conduce to their leading a holy life. So every particular person ought by themselves to ponder their gift, and other circumstances, which will let them see what is sin and what is duty in this case.

6. Cohabitation and conjugal love and affection betwixt married persons, without which that state will be no fence to purity, but a snare. Hence Solomon says, Prov. v. 19, 20. 'Let her be as the loving hind, and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times, and be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?'

7. *Lastly*, Shunning all occasions, and resisting all temptations, to the contrary, Prov. v. 8. forecited. So did Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 8. It is a dangerous business to parley with them. The town that is content to capitulate with the enemy, is next door to surrendering. There are two sins that the scripture bids us flee from. 1. Idolatry, 1 Cor. x. 14. 2. Uncleanness, 1 Cor. vi. 18. Why? Because they are bewitching evils. It is safer to flee, than to stand to fight them.

SECONDLY, This command requires us to preserve the chastity of others, and that so far as we can, in their hearts, lips, and lives. For so far as we might prevent the sin of others, and do it not, and much more when we occasion it, it becomes ours. Besides, that in preserving our own chastity, we preserve that of others, and so the means conducing to the one do also conduce to the other. Our duty in this point may be reduced to these two heads.

1. That we may do nothing which may ensnare others. For whosoever lays the snare is partner in the sin that comes by it. A lamentable instance of this we have in Judah and his daughter-in-law: they were neither of them careful to preserve the other's chastity, and so they fell each by another's snare, Gen. xxxviii. 14, 15, 16. For this cause modest apparel is here required, 1 Tim. ii. 9: and a careful avoiding of all unseemly behaviour, which may have a tendency to defile the minds of others, though we ourselves have no ill intention. Thus, Bathsheba's washing herself in a place where she might be seen of others, was the sad occasion of the sin that David and she were plunged into, 2 Sam. xi. 2. And truly where both grace and good manners are wanting, it is little wonder that people break their necks over one another.

2. That we do every thing incumbent on us to preserve the chastity of others, in heart, speech, and behaviour. Let married persons live together in due love and affection to one another. Let each one be an example of purity to others. Let those whom ye see in danger be rescued by all means, whether by force or persuasion, as the circumstances require. And let none bring others guilt on their own heads, by being silent when they see the smoke, till the flame rise and discover itself. Let parents and masters do what they can to prevent the ruin of their children and servants, by rebuking

any lightness about them, exhorting them, and praying for them; keeping them out of ill company, not suffering them to be idle or vague, and seasonably disposing of children in marriage. Our bodies are the Lord's; we are or ought to be the temples of God; the heart is the most holy place of the temple, and our speech and behaviour the holy place. Let us take heed we bring in no unclean thing there, but keep his temple pure; for if any defile the temple of God, him will God destroy.

II. I come now to shew, what is forbidden in this command. It forbids 'all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions.'

In nothing more quickly did the corrupt nature of man vent itself, than in inordinate concupiscence, which brought shame along with it, as its just punishment; which makes it hard to speak of it, and so much the rather that corrupt nature is apt, through Satan's influence, to turn the very commandment against it unto an occasion of sin. Therefore, though there is a necessity of speaking something on it, we cannot enlarge with that freedom upon it that we can do on other commands. Sist your hearts, then, as in the presence of a holy God, who will call us to an account in this matter before his tremendous judgment-seat, and hear his holy law, *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

In this short abbreviate of the law of God, where one sin is expressly condemned, under it are forbidden all sins of the same kind. So here the whole dunghill of filthiness is set before us for our abhorrence, and detestation of our souls, as we would not bring down the wrath of God on us. Here then all gross acts of filthiness are forbidden. As,

1. All unnatural lusts, not to be mentioned without horror; filthy fellowship with devils, as the guilty do suppose; Sodomy, persons abusing themselves with those of their own sex, Rom. i. 24,—27; bestiality, Lev. xviii. 22; And to these we may add incest, which is betwixt persons within the forbidden degrees of consanguinity or affinity, Lev. xviii. 6. Concerning which this is to be observed, that a man must hold at the same distance from the relations of his wife as his own, and contrariwise, Lev. xx. 14; and such unnatural mixtures can never be sanctified by marriage.

2. Adultery, where one of the parties, or both are mar-



ried. In this case the aggravations of the sin of the married party will be justly charged upon the single person; and for both, 'whoremongers and adulterers God will judge,' Heb. xiii. 4. And bigamy and polygamy are adultery; for the vile fact cannot be sanctified, but made worse, by marriage with the adulterer or adulteress, Hos. iv. 10; 'They shall commit whoredom, and shall increase.'

3. Fornication, which is betwixt single persons, Col. iii. 5, 6. 'Mortify your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, &c. For which things sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience.' Whoredom is a sin that without repentance is a sad badge of a subject of Satan, Eph. v. 5. 'No whoremonger nor unclean person—hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God and Christ.' And a vast inconsistency there is betwixt being a member of Christ, and that of a harlot, 1 Cor. vi. 15.

4. Rape, or forcing a person to filthiness, Deut. xxii. 25; This is a capital crime by the laws of God and men.

5. Secret uncleanness in a person by themselves alone, whether they be waking, Eph. v. 12; or sleeping, at least so far as they have occasioned it to themselves by their own corrupt imaginations.

6. *Lastly*, Immoderate and unseasonable use even of the marriage-bed, and much more of the bed of whoredom. Mark these passages, 1 Thess. iv. 3, 4. 1 Cor. vii. 5. Isa. lviii. 13. Ezek. xxii. 10. and xviii. 6.

These are the several kinds of vileness here forbidden. But this command goes further, and forbids three sorts of uncleanness besides,

1. Uncleanness in heart, all speculative filthiness, unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections, tho' people do not intend to pursue them to the gross act, Matth. v. 28; 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' Chap. xv. 19; 'Out of the heart proceed—adulteries, fornications.' These fall not under the eye of men, but are open to the eye of God, who will judge accordingly. A voluntary thought of these things is dangerous, a delightful rolling of them in the heart is uncleanness before God, and a vitiated habit, whereby on every light occasion these filthy sparks are kindled in the heart, is worst of all, and most abominable.

2. Uncleanness in words, all filthy communications and

obscene language, Eph. iv. 29; 'Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.' They are the discoveries of a filthy heart; for 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,' contrary to nature, propaling those things which nature teaches to keep secret. They are snares to the hearers; and to speak of them for delight, is to act the filthiness in words, when they cannot do it otherwise. Neither will the art some have in dressing up their filthy notions in figurative terms excuse; but these in some sort are most dangerous, because the devilish wit displayed in them makes them more sticking; and so by means of the like phrases occurring in holy exercises, they are the readier even to defile these. Of this sort are filthy songs and ballad singing; and the delightful listening to such things, as the simple youth did to the speeches of the adulterous whore, Prov. vii. 18,—21.

3. Uncleaness in actions. Besides the gross acts, there are others leading thereunto, which are here also forbidden. As,

(1.) Wanton looks: there are 'eyes full of adultery,' 2 Pet. ii. 14; 'wanton eyes,' Isa. iii. 16; Even a look for unlawful carnal delight is the venting of the impurity of the heart; and though it be only from levity and curiosity, it is sinful, as a mean leading to evil.

(2.) Impudent and light behaviour, and immodest gestures, Isa. iii. 16; indecent postures, contrary to religion and good manners. These are hellish matters of sport, that defile the actors, and those that are witnesses to them without abhorrence. And on this ground stage plays and filthy pictures are amongst the things forbidden in this command, Ezek. xxiii. 14,—16.

(3.) Luxurious embraces and dalliances. These are as smoke going before the flame, and were practised by the adulterous whore, Prov. vii. 13.

Now, as all these are here forbidden, so all occasions and incentives to lust are forbidden, all that has a tendency to corrupt our own or neighbour's chastity.

(1.) Immodest apparel, Prov. vii. 10. God appointed apparel; [1.] For necessity, to cover our shame and nakedness; [2.] To distinguish sexes; [3.] To distinguish callings, the more noble from the meaner sort. The devil has found out the fourth, to be enticements to lust.

(2.) Keeping ill company. This has been the ruin of many: therefore Solomon advises, Prov. v. 8. ‘Remove thy way far from her,’ a strange woman, or whore; ‘and come not nigh the door of her house.’ It was Joseph’s commendation, that he fled from his mistress. Whatever the company be, people should beware that they cast not themselves into snares.

(3.) Idleness, the nursery of all filthiness, Ezek. xvi. 49. This exposeth to many temptations; for Satan will be ready to find idle people work. Gadding and vaguing abroad can hardly miss to have an unsavoury end.

(4.) Intemperance, gluttony, and drunkenness. These have a tendency to murder, which is forbidden in the sixth command, and to uncleanness, forbidden in the one under consideration, Prov. xxiii. 30, 31, 33. Notable to this purpose is that scripture, Jer. v. 8; ‘They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour’s wife.’

5. Promiscuous dancing, or dancing of men and women together. This entertainment, however reckoned innocent among many, is evidently an incentive to lust, Isa. xxiii. 15, 16, 17; It is supposed, that it was to a dancing match among the daughters of the land that Dinah went forth, when she was dealt with as an harlot. This practice seems to be struck at by these scriptures, Rom. xiii. 13; ‘Let us walk—not in chambering and wantonness,’ 1 Pet. iv. 3. where mention is made of ‘walking in revelling.’ It is offensive to the grave and pious, is condemned by our church, yea, and has been condemned by some sober heathens.

(6.) Undue delay of marriage, 1 Cor. vii. 7, 8, 9; for they that refuse the remedy, strengthen the disease.

(7.) Unjust divorce, Matth. v. 33; wilful desertion, 1 Cor. vii. 12, 13; want of conjugal affection, and all harshness and unkindness betwixt married persons. These are to be avoided, as incitements to uncleanness.

(8.) *Lastly*, The popish doctrine and practice of forbidding lawful marriages, 1 Tim. iv. 3; dispensing with unlawful marriages, Mark vi. 18; tolerating of stews or bawdy-houses, Deut. xxiii. 17; and entangling vows of single life, Matth. xix. 10, 11.



I shall next make some improvement of this subject.

1. Let those that have fallen into the sin of uncleanness, repent, and walk humbly all the days of their life under the sense of it. There are, alas ! not a few amongst us to whom this exhortation belongs. And perhaps, if their eyes were opened, they would see something in their lot that God has sent to go along with them, as a mark of his displeasure against that their sin; wherein they might with no great difficulty read their old sin in a continued punishment. That sin may be forgotten with us, that is not so with the Lord.

2. Let those that stand take heed lest they fall. Labour to get your hearts possessed with a dread of this sin, and watch against it, especially ye that are young people, seeing it is a sin most incident to youth, when the passions are most vigorous ; which yet may stick fast with the blue marks of God's displeasure upon you when you come to age. For motives, consider,

(1.) It is not only a sin, but ordinarily, if not always, a plague and punishment for other sins. It is a mark of God's anger against the person that is permitted to fall into it, Prov. xx. 14. 'The mouth of a strange woman is a deep pit : he that is abhorred of the Lord, shall fall therein.' This is a heavy mark of God's indignation, which is worse than to fall into a fever, or some lingering distemper ; for a person may recover of these in a short time, but it is not so easy to recover the other.

(2.) It is a sin that very few ever get grace to repent of. It stupifies the conscience, and wastes all sense of sin from it, Hos. iv. 11. I have seen, alas ! too many that have made public satisfaction for that sin ; but allow me to say, I have seen very few by whose repentance I was much edified. Hear what the Spirit of God says of these unhappy people, Prov. ii. 19. 'None that go unto her, return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.' *None*, that is, very few; but some indeed do, as among the Corinthians, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 11. And be not offended, but cautioned, if I say, that few women particularly ever get grace to repent of it. Solomon said it before me, Eccl. vii. 28. 'A woman among all those have I not found.' And observe what is said, Acts xxiv. 25. that Felix trembled when Paul preached, though he repented not ; but there is not a word of Drusilla's being moved.

3. It dishonours and debases the body, 1 Cor. vi. 18. Our bodies are the members of Christ or should be; but how are they debased, being made members of a harlot? And how low and contemptible a thing is such a wretched creature, even in the eyes of those that join with them?

(4.) It leaves an indelible stain upon their reputation; their honour is sunk, and there is no recovering of it, Prov. vi. 33. Though the sin may be pardoned before God, yet the blot lies on their name, while they have a name on the earth. Yea, and when they are dead and gone, their bastard posterity still lie under the stain, whereof they could be no cause.

(5.) Poverty and want oft-times follow it. It natively tends to poverty, Prov. v. 10. and there is a secret curse of that nature that often accompanies it, Prov. vi. 26. 'By means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread.' How many have been made miserable by it, who have had occasion as long as they lived to remember they had ruined themselves?

(6.) *Lastly*, It is ruining to the soul, Prov. vi. 32. 'He that doth it,' commit adultery with a woman, 'destroyeth his own soul.' It ruins it here, in so far as it defiles the conscience, fetters the affections, blinds the mind, utterly unfits for communion with God, till the guilt be washed off by the application of Christ's blood, after a frightful awakening of the conscience. And if they do not repent of this sin, it will destroy the soul for ever. Let these scriptures imprint a horror of it in the minds of all, Heb. xiii. 4. 1 Cor. vi. 9. Gal. v. 19, 21. Rev. xxi. 8.

I close with a few directions, in so many words.

1. Give yourselves away soul and body to Jesus Christ, and learn to live by faith, sensible of your own weakness, and relying on his promised strength; for without him ye can resist no sin, nor temptation to sin.

2. Beware of a carnal frame of sloth and laziness. Labour to be spiritual and heavenly in the frame of your heart, Gal. v. 16. 'Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.'

3. Watch over your heart and senses. 'Make a covenant with your eyes, as Job did, that ye may avoid unlawful looks; and never venture on the devil's ground, otherwise ye will fall into the snare.'

4. Study mortification of all your unruly lusts and passions, and beware of all occasions and incentives to this wickedness.

5. Keep at a distance from immodest company, and be not too frolicsome and foolish, light and airy in your discourse.

6. *Lastly*, Pray fervently and importunately, that the Lord may save you from this foul sin, and all temptations to it; saying with David, Psal. cxix. 37. ‘Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.’



OF THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

EXOD. XX. 15.—*Thou shalt not steal.*

**T**HIS command respects men’s goods and outward estate in the world; and the scope of it is to procure and further the same by all good means. And the law of God respecting this plainly says, that religion is highly concerned in our civil actions, working, buying, and selling, and all the ways of advancing of the outward estate. In these we are hedged about by this command, as well as in natural things by the sixth and seventh. God’s law follows us wherever we go, to the house or field, bed or board, church or market. This command also plainly establishes distinct properties, and that there is no universal community of goods, but every one has his own portion.

This being a command of the second table, it respects ourselves as well as our neighbour. And so the meaning is, Thou shalt not steal from thyself nor any other; thou shalt not wrong thyself nor others. And as in every negative is implied an affirmative, so while stealth or theft is here forbidden, the contrary is required, namely, the procuring and furthering of our own and others welfare in these things, but by means only that are lawful.

In discoursing further from this subject, I shall shew,

1 What is required in this command, viz. ‘the lawful



procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others.'

II. What is forbidden, viz. 'Whatsoever doth or may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbour's wealth or outward estate.'

III. Make application.

I. I am to shew what is required in this command. And,

FIRST, God requires us in this command, by lawful means, to procure and further our own wealth and outward estate. We may take up this in these seven things.

1. We should look unto God for things necessary and convenient for us. Here we should begin our care about temporal things; 'for he it is that giveth thee power to get wealth,' Deut. viii. 18. and without his appointment our endeavours will not succeed, Psal. cxxvii. All the creatures depend on God's provision, as caged birds on those to whose care they are committed, Prov. xxx. 8. And so our Lord teaches us to pray every day, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' Matth. vi. 11. seeing God has comprehended this in the promise.

2. A provident care and study to get things necessary and suitable to our condition, 1 Tim. v. 8. To pray, and cast off means, is presumption; to use means, but neglect praying, and looking to the Lord, is atheism. We should keep the middle way betwixt carelessness and anxiety, and hold in the way of moderate care in these things; for we are not to expect to be like the lilies that toil not, neither spin, and yet are clothed.

3. For this cause every body must have a lawful calling and employment, and duly use it, that so he may be useful to himself, and worth his room in the world, and not like mice and rats, good for nothing but to devour what others labour for. Adam in innocence had a calling, that of dressing and keeping the garden of Eden, Gen. ii. 15. and so had his sons afterwards, though born to greater estate than any now can pretend to, the one being a keeper of sheep, and the other a tiller of the ground, Gen. iv. 2. But we must be sure it be a lawful calling, Eph. iv. 28. But what avails it if it be not duly used? Therefore God requires of men that they labour to be skilful in it, and not bunglers at what they take in hand, Prov. xiv. 8. and he allows men to look to himself for that end, Isa. xxviii. 26. and likewise that they

be diligent and industrious in it, and not loiterers, Prov. x. 4. for laziness will make a thief, either directly or indirectly. And this is quite opposite to God's appointment, Gen. iii. 19.

4. We are to take the moderate comfortable use of the product of our diligence, using and disposing of it for our necessity and conveniency, according to our condition in the world, Eccl. x. 12, 13. For to what end do men get wealth, if they have no power comfortably to use it? As good want it, as not to have the necessary and convenient use of it. Such steal and rob (in the sense of this command) from their nearest neighbour, that is, themselves.

5. Withal God requires men here to be frugal and honestly sparing, i. e. to keep a due medium betwixt lavishness and niggard pinching, Prov. xxi. 20. This frugality directs to the right managing of what God has given, so as, (1.) People do not cast out their substance on trifles that are for no good purpose, but on such things as there is some solid use of, Isa. lv. 2. and amongst these are to be reckoned extravagant furniture for back and belly, in which people cannot satisfyingly to conscience answer the question, What needs all this waste? (2.) That of those things which may be useful, there be nothing lost. When Christ had provided bread enough, he gives particular orders to gather up the fragments, John vi. 12. (3.) That this care proceed not from carnal affection to the world, but from conscience towards God, that we abuse not his benefits, and take care to do good by what is spared to ourselves or to others, though it were even to beasts. *Lastly*, True frugality will be effectual to make us ready to lay out for God on pious uses, to the poor and otherwise, as the best way to save, Prov. xi. 24.

6. Careful avoiding of whatsoever may embarrass our affairs, and wrong our own wealth and outward estate.—Thus God requires men to take heed that they do not inveigle themselves in unnecessary pleas and law-suits, 1 Cor. vi. 1,—8. rash cautionry, Prov. xi. 5. whereby sometimes men ruin themselves and families, and so sin against God, themselves, and their house. Of this sort may be reckoned people's rash and foolish engaging in things that they are in no probable case rightly to manage, stretching farther than they can well be supposed able to reach.

7. *Lastly*, Moderation of heart with respect to worldly goods, Phil. iv. 5. (1.) We must moderate our judgment

about them, that we put not too high a value and esteem on them, 1 Tim. vi. 17. (2.) We must moderate our wills about them, that we be not among those that will be rich; for that will carry us over this hedge, ver. 9. (3.) We must moderate our affections to them. We must beware of love to them, ver. 10; for the covetous heart will not stick at undue means. We must moderate our care about them, resting in God's promise, and depending on his providence, Matth. vi. 25, 26. and be content with our lot, Heb. xiii. 5. For they that are not content, have what they will, are always poor; and their eye will be evil towards others also.

SECONDLY, God requires in this command, that we, by lawful means, procure and further the wealth and outward estate of others. We are not born for ourselves, nor must we live for ourselves. We are members one of another as men, and much more as Christians; and selfishness is offensive to God, and destructive to society. We may reduce this to two general rules of practice, founded on the light of nature, and confirmed by the word.

*First*, Give every one their due. The natural conscience dictates this, however little it is regarded; and God's word confirms it, Rom. xiii. 7. If ye do it not, ye rob them, or steal from them. So God will reckon, and so will men's consciences reckon at last. In whatever relation ye stand to them as masters, servants, neighbours, or under any particular bargain with them, or obligation to them, give them what is due to them.

*Secondly*, Do as ye would be done to. This also a natural conscience dictates, and the word confirms, Mat. vii. 12. If we must love our neighbour as ourselves, we must not do to him what we would have no body do to us. If ye do otherwise ye steal from them, ye wrong them, your own consciences being judges. For if they would do so to you, ye declare they are unjust to you; so if ye do so to them, ye must either find out a law for them, which ye are not under, or else your own consciences will condemn you as breakers of the law of God, which is common to both. To move you to walk by these rules, consider,

1. In vain will ye pretend to Christianity without it.— This is natural religion, which revelation came not to destroy, but to confirm, Tit. ii. 12. And the Heathens, who in their Pagan darkness saw these rules of righteousness, and



walked more by them than many Christians, will rise up in judgment against many that profess the name of Christ, and yet make so little conscience that way. People must either walk by them, or quit the name of Christians. If they will do neither of them now, Christ will strip them at length out of their player's coat, and make them appear before the world in their proper colours.

2. Ye will never see heaven without it, 1 Cor. vi. 9. If people get to heaven in another way, they must step over all the law and the prophets, Matth. vii. 12. I grant that these will not bring people to heaven; people may walk by them, as some sober heathens have done, and yet go to hell; but without it people will never see it. For though our good works and honest dealings with men will not save us, yet our ill works and unrighteous dealings will damn us, 1 Thess. iv. 6. But to be more particular, we may take up this in five things.

1st, God requires of us that we be careful to prevent our neighbour's skaith and loss, as we have opportunity, Deut. xxii. 1. For the loss we see him get and can prevent, but do it not, is in effect the same as if we downrightly procured it to him. That which we can hinder, and do not, is our fault before the Lord; and in this sense each man is bound to be his brother's keeper.

2dly, That we deal honestly in all matters between man and man. If we would not come under the guilt of stealing from them, we must in all our dealings with them be strict observers of truth, faithfulness, and justice; dealing in simplicity and plainness, Psal. xv. 2, 4. Zech. vii. 4, 10; whether it be in bargains, buying and selling in matters of trust concredited to us, or any thing of his we have under our hands. We must deal with God, as if the eyes of men were on us; and with men as knowing the eyes of God are on us. A Christian indeed will do so. He will be an upright dealer with men, a slave to his word, a man that never wants a quick-sighted witness to his actions. And therefore it will be all one to him whether his party be absent or present, skilful and that will not be cheated, or simple and easily deceived.

3dly, Restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof. This looks especially to two cases.

(1.) Things lost and found ought to be restored to the

owners, and not concealed and kept, Deut. xxii. 2, 3: for the keeping up of what is another's against the owner's will, is a sort of theft and injustice, contrary to the rules aforesaid. And therefore it cannot be kept with a good conscience.

(2.) Whatsoever we have wronged our neighbour of, by taking it away from him, ought to be restored, Lev. vi. 2, 4. There is, [1.] The case of trust, wherein a thing committed to him by another is kept up, on some pretence that it is lost or so. [2.] In case of fellowship in trading together, when one puts a thing in his partner's hand, in which case it is easy for one to deceive another. [3.] In case of violence, when it is taken away by robbery, stealth, yea, and oppression, 1 Sam. xii. 3. [4.] In case of cheatery, when by fraud and circumvention it is taken away.

Now, in all these cases, and the like, restitution is necessary. It is true, actual restitution is sometimes beyond the power of him that should restore; yet in such a case the party is bound to go all the length he can, as appears from Exod. xxii. 3. But a readiness to restore to the utmost of our power is absolutely necessary: For he does not truly repent of his sin, who is not willing to do all he can to repair the wrong; nor is the love of righteousness and his neighbour in that man, who is not ready to give every one their due. And in this sense the rule holds, *Non tollitur peccatum, nisi restituitur*. It is remarkable that it is made one of the signs of true repentance, Ezek. xxxiii. 15. 'If the wicked restore the pledge give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.' And said Zaccheus, Luke xix. 8. 'If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.'

Now, the party obliged to make restitution, is not only the person that took a thing away, but he in whose hand it is found; though he had it not fraudulently, yet upon the discovery of the thing, he is obliged to return it, because the person who (suppose) sold it to him, had no right to it, and therefore could give him none. But particularly the person himself, and his heirs, are bound to restore, Job xx. 10; and that the thing itself, or the value of it, yea, and a reasonable acknowledgement for the loss of it, Lev. vi. 5. Luke xix. 8. The restitution is to be made to the owner, or, if he be dead,

to his heirs; and if neither can be found, to the Lord, Numb. v. 6, 7, 8. Luke xix. 8.

In case the reputation of the party be in hazard, the restitution should be managed with that prudence, that it may not be unnecessarily blasted; for which cause they that are in straits that way ought to consult some prudent person, either minister or Christian, that will be tender of them.

*4thly*, Charity and justice in the matter of loans. Here,

(1.) Lending to our neighbour in his necessity, is a duty we owe him for the welfare of his outward estate, Matth. v. 42; not only lending upon interest, which is lawful, so that it be moderate, Deut. xxiii. 20; but freely, viz. to those that are poor, and require the loan for pressing necessity. In that case we ought to lend them freely such a quantity of money and goods as we can well enough bear the loss of, in case they be rendered incapable to pay it again. And so is that scripture to be understood, Luke vi. 35; ‘Lend, hoping for nothing again.’

(2.) Returning or paying again thankfully what is borrowed by us, Exod. xxii. 14; And therefore we are not to borrow more than we are in a probable capacity to pay; which while some have not regarded, they have liberally lived on other men’s substance, and in the end have ruined other families, and quite devoured their money, as in another case, Gen. xxxi. 15; for no man has more that he can call his own, than what is over and above his debt, Psal. xxxvii. 21; If the incapacity flow from mere providence, it is their affliction, but not their sin, 2 Kings iv. 1.

*Lastly*, Giving unto the poor, or those that are in need, according to their necessity and our ability, Luke xi. 41; They are our neighbours, to whose outward estate we are obliged to look; they are to have mercy shewn to them that way. A disposition of soul to help them is requisite in all, even in those that have not a farthing to give, Prov. xi. 25; What people give must be their own, 1 John iii. 17; it must be *thy* bread, Eccl. xi. 1; And therefore such as have not of their own, they cannot give what is another’s, without the tacit consent and approbation or allowance of the owner; neither will God accept their robbery for burnt-offering. But even people that must work hard for their own bread, must work the harder that they may be able to give, Eph. iv. 28. But they to whom God has given a more plentiful



measure of the world's goods, must be so much the more liberal to the poor; for to whom much is given, of him is much required. In helping of the necessitous, the apostle's rules are to be observed, that special regard is to be had to our relations that may be in straits, 1 Tim. v. 8; and that though all that need are to be helped, yet special respect is to be had to the poor members of Christ, Gal. vi. 10; and the greatest need is to be most regarded and most helped.

This duty is to be managed with these qualities.

(1.) People must give to the poor out of conscience towards God, and a design to honour him, Prov. iii. 9; not out of vain-glory, else the work is lost as to acceptance, Matth. vi. 1, 2.

(2.) With an honourable regard to the poor, either as Christians, and members of the same mystical body of Christ, or at least as of the same blood with ourselves, and not with contempt, and shaming of them, 1 Cor. xi. 22.

(3.) Cheerfully and freely, not grudgingly and as by constraint, 2 Cor. ix. 7.

(4.) According to the measure of what the Lord has given unto us, 1 Cor. xvi. 2; So the more we have, the more we ought to give. The particular quantity cannot be defined, but by wisdom and charity it must be defined by every one for themselves, Psal. cxii. 5.

To engage you to this duty, consider,

[1.] We are not absolute masters, but stewards of our goods. The whole world is God's household; and he has made some stewards to feed others, Luke xvi. 10, 11, 12; We must give account of our stewardship to him, who could have put us in their case, and them in ours.

[2.] It is a duty bound on us with ties of nature and revelation. The law of God requires it, 2 Cor. viii. 9. Nature itself binds it on us, teaching us to do to others as we would be done by, if in their case. Not only Christianity, but humanity calls for it.

[3.] In this duty there is a singular excellency. For (1.) It is a blessed thing by the verdict of our blessed Lord, Acts xx. 35; 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' (2.) The image and likeness of God shines forth in it in a peculiar manner, Luke vi. 35, 36; 'Love ye your enemies, and do good; and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the High-

est: for he is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful.' Though Christ became poor for us, yet he gave to the poor, to commend it to us by his example. (3.) It is particularly taken notice of in the day of judgment, Matth xxv. 34, 35.

*Lastly*, It is the most frugal and advantageous way of managing of the world's goods. For,

(1.) It is the way to secure to ourselves a through-bearing; there is a good security for it, Prov. xxviii. 27; He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack.'

(2.) It is the best way to secure what we have, which is liable to so many accidents, Eccl. xi. 1. 'Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.' Laying out for God is better security than laying up what God calls for. For so it is put in a sure hand, that will be sure to pay it again. The poor and needy are God's receivers, Prov. xix. 17; 'He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again.'

(3.) It is the way to be rich, as the Bible points out the way, Prov. iii. 9; 'Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of thine increase. Solomon observes the accomplishment of it, Prov. xi. 24. 'There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.'

(4.) It is the way to secure comfort to us in the time when trouble shall overtake us, Psal. xli. 1, 2, 3; Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.'

*Lastly*, God has promised that such shall find mercy, Matth. v. 7; always taking along what is said, ver. 3. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' See Luke xvi. 9. 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19.

II. I come now to shew, what is forbidden in the eighth commandment. It 'forbids whatsoever doth or may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbour's wealth or outward estate.'

The sins forbidden in this command may be reduced to

these two heads: whatever doth or may hinder our own wealth unjustly; and whatever doth or may unjustly hinder our neighbour's wealth or outward estate.

FIRST, Whatsoever doth or may hinder our own wealth unjustly. This is necessarily understood: for we may neither do a sinful thing to procure our own wealth, nor yet to preserve it. But when there are lawful means which Providence calls us to the use of, and we do not use them, we sin against God and ourselves. Thus this command says to each of us, in the first place, Thou shalt not steal from thyself. Thus we are guilty;

1. By idleness, when people that are able do not employ themselves in some honest calling or work according to their ability, 2 Thess. iii. 11; The idle man wrongs himself, while he exposes himself to poverty, and so to a snare, by his not using means to preserve and improve his substance. And he sins against God, who has appointed, that in the sweat of his face man shall eat bread, Gen. iii. 19; And this is so although he have enough of his own, and needs not be burdensome to others, Ezek. xvi. 49; He makes himself a waif for Satan to pick up.

2. By carelessness, sloth, and mismanagement in our calling, Prov. xviii. 9; Carelessness lets occasions of furthering our own wealth slip; and slothfulness in business is next to doing nothing at all. And they that cannot put down their hands to work diligently, will hardly miss some time or another to put out their hand to steal. Careless and slothful management of business by one hand in a family, may do more mischief than many diligent hands can remedy, Prov. xiv. 1. Religion does not allow either men or women to be drones in their family, good for nothing but to make a noise, take up room, and feed on the product of the diligence of their relatives, Rom. xii. 11.

3. By not owning God in our business, and so slighting his blessing, who gives man power to get wealth, Deut. viii. 18; It is he that gives rains and fruitful seasons, that makes the cattle to thrive or to be diminished, and that prospereth the work of our hands. Do they not then stand in their own light that acknowledge him not in these things?

4. By wastefulness and prodigality, whereby people foolishly spend and lavish away what God has brought to their hands, Prov. xxi. 17; And indeed these two ordinarily go together,



unthriftiness and wastery; for readily they that have no hands to gather, have two to scatter; and they that can do no good to get, are active at putting away. Thus they not only misapply what God has given them, but take the high way to poverty and stealing.

5. By rash engaging in such things as may ruin our wealth and outward estate, as unnecessary inveigling ourselves in law pleas, whereby the contentious humours of some have made them like the ass in the fable, that seeking his horns, lost his ears, 1 Cor. vi. 6, 7, 8; as also cautionary, which although it be duty in some cases, as giving and lending is, yet if it be not managed with prudence and discretion may prove but a plucking the bread out of the mouths of our own, to put it in the mouths of strangers, Prov. xi. 15. and vi. 1, &c.

6. By distrustful and distracting care in getting and keeping of worldly things, Matth. vi. 31. Can that man be wealthy indeed, who, have what he will, never has enough, and whose abundance suffereth him not to sleep? Eccl. iv. 8. This keeps him from the comfort of what he has, that he robs himself of, which is the only valuable thing in worldly enjoyments, Prov. x. 22.

7. *Lastly*, By sordidness, which is when a man has no power to enjoy the gift of God, Eccl. vi. 1, 2. We can scarcely say, have what they will, that they have it, but it has them; for they have not the convenient decent use of it. They are of no use but to be serviceable to people's necessities and conveniencies; so that where that is wanting, it is as good as if they had them not.

To conclude this: Let us walk conscientiously in these things, knowing that we are accountable to God in them. We are not at our own disposal, but must lay out ourselves as God calls us. Neither may we do with our own what we will; for we are but inferior lords of them, and must use them agreeably to the will of the great Proprietor.

SECONDLY, Whatsoever doth or may unjustly hinder our neighbour's wealth or outward estate, is forbidden here as theft in God's account. Whatsoever way we wrong others in their outward estate, comes under this notion of stealing. So this command says, Thou shalt not steal from others. In respect of our neighbour, this command is broken two ways.

*First*, By direct stealing, which is the taking away of what

is our neighbour's against his will, to his hurt and loss. If it be done secretly, without the knowledge of the owner, it is called theft; if it be by violence, it is robbery, whether by sea or land. There are two sorts of it.

1. Stealing of persons, called man-stealing, 1 Tim. i. 9. 10. It was the stealing away of men, women, or children, either to use them or sell them for slaves. Slavery having no place among us, there is no practising of it with us, so far as I know. But there want not other sinful practices participating of the nature of this sin, such as running away with persons for marriage, whereby their parents are robbed of what is their own; enticing away of other people's servants, to the prejudice of their masters; and seducing of people's children to vicious and lewd practices. All which are contrary to the golden rule of justice, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.'

(2) Stealing of substance. Whereof there are three kinds. (1.) Stealing from the public or commonwealth, whereby the magistrate and nation are wronged. (2.) Stealing from the church, taking away of what is devoted for pious uses, for maintaining the service of God and the poor. It is called sacrilege, Rom. ii. 22. These are the worst kinds of theft in regard of the relation these things have to God. (3.) Single theft, whereby private persons are wronged in their private substance. Whether the thing stolen be little or great, he that takes it away, is a thief, and is therefore excluded out of the kingdom of heaven, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. A man may lose his soul by the unlawful getting of what is not worth a penny, as well as of what is worth a thousand. Did men and women believe the curse of God which they take up with the thing they take away from others, they would see they had a sad bargain of it, Zech. v. 3, 4.

*Secondly*, By indirect stealing, which, though not accounted theft among men, yet it is so in the sight of God. And of this there are a great many ways, all here forbidden. People are thus guilty of theft, and break this command.

1. In their hearts, by nourishing those lusts that have a tendency thereto; for as there is heart-adultery, so there is heart theft. And this especially lies in these three things: (1.) Discontent with our condition, Heb. xiii. 5. This lays people open to the worst of snares. (2.) Envy and

grudging at the good of others. This is the evil eye, which devours the substance of others. (3.) Covetousness. A covetous heart is that which stretches out the hand to steal.

2. In their conversation, by taking such ways as tend to the wronging of others in their outward estate, and really do wrong them, and take from them unjustly. This command is broken,

1st, By the idleness and sloth of those that are not able otherwise to maintain themselves. Every one is bound by this command to have a calling, and be diligent in it, if they be able. Therefore it is a sin for such to give up themselves to idleness, and live without a calling, or to be lazy in it, Eph. iv. 28. 2 Thess. iii. 10, 11. Hence it is evident,

(1.) That sturdy beggars are not to be tolerated; and no person being able to work for their maintenance can with a good conscience make a trade of begging. They that are able to work, but are not willing, ought to be compelled to it; and it is the sin and shame of the government that it is not so. For they directly set themselves in opposition to God's ordinance, Gen iii. 19. They carry not themselves either as subjects or church-members, and dispose themselves that way to all manner of wickedness without controul.

(2.) That no person can with a good conscience lay the burden of their maintenance on others, further than what they cannot prevent by their own utmost diligence in labouring for themselves. And therefore those that will rather seek than work, though they be able, are reckoned in God's account to steal it, though they think not so.

Idle and lazy persons are guilty of stealth two ways. They wrong them that have, being without necessity a burden to them. They wrong others that are really poor and unable to help themselves; for they rob them at least in part of what they should get; and whereas they ought to labour to help them, they do it not, Eph. iv. 28.

2dly, By unlawful, base, and unwarrantable ways of getting gain. This the Spirit calls *filthy lucre*. For men must not only work, but work that which is good, that they may gain a maintenance. And if they take sinful ways to obtain it, it is theft in the sight of God.

(1.) Using unlawful arts or trades, Acts xix. 19, 24, 25. Such are not working the thing that is good, but in itself evil, and tending to the debauching of mankind.



(2.) By raking together gain by our own sin, or the sin of others, as for gain to play the whore, or to do or help others to any sinful thing. Of this sort is the selling drink to those that go to excess in it, where people are insrumental in the ruin of the souls, bodies, and means of others, for their own filthy gain. Of this sort also are your set drinkings to help people to some stock; which is an occasion of much sin and excess. It must needs be base gain that is made that way, as being no way warranted by the word of God of helping them that are in need; and ordinarily it is seen to be blasted, so that it does little good. Must men be obliged to abuse themselves, and God's good creatures, to help others? Is that a way becoming Christian gravity and sobriety for helping those that need? But they will cast out their money liberally that way, that will not part with a penny to a poor object. Let those that need ply their hands well; and if that will not do to help them, let them take Christian methods for their help otherwise, and not run themselves on the sword-point of the curse denounced against such base gain, Hab. ii. 15. 'Wo unto him that giveth his neighbour drink: that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also.' And let men of gravity and sobriety discourage those ways, and not partake of other men's sins.

(3.) By making merchandise of things that ought not to be sold or bought. If they be spiritual things, as sacraments and church-offices, it is Simony, Acts viii. 20. If it be of justice, it is bribery, Job xv. 34. Or whasotever it is that people make merchandise of, which ought neither to be bought nor sold.

(4.) It is a base gain that is made by your penny-weddings, as they are commonly managed, being condemned both by the laws of the land and of the church. And for people to begin the world with treading upon the laudable laws of the state, and constitutions of the church, for a little base gain, cannot be but a sinful way, being offensive and disorderly, 1 Cor. x. 32. 2 Thess. iii. 6. Our church, by act of Assembly, has declared them to be fruitful seminaries of all lasciviousness and debauchery, as well by the excessive number of people convened thereto, as by the extortion of them therein, and licentiousness thereat, to the great dishonour of God, the scandal of our Christian profession, and the prejudice of the country's welfare. And I appeal to your own consciences,

if it be not a just character of them. The drinkings, dancings, excesses, and quarrelings that accompany them, are they suitable to the rules of Christianity? They are generally reckoned oppression, and a gentle way of begging; but I fear God will reckon them stealing, as a way of base gain. But we have such fresh experience of your respect to warnings from the Lord's word, that I need not doubt but if ye had occasion, we should have a penny-wedding next Tuesday, Hos. iv. 4.

(5.) It is base gain that is made by playing at cards and dice, or any such game of hazard. For the lot being an appeal to God, it is dangerous to make a play of it. They occasion much sin of blaspheming God's providence, under the name of ill luck when people lose, commending their good luck when they win, mispending of time through a bewitching in the matter, whereby they cannot give over, the winners hoping to win more, and the losers hoping for better. Surely it is no working of that which is good, Eph. iv. 28. A Popish doctor, in a treatise of his on plays, tells us, that all games of hazard are condemned by Pagans, the fathers, the most able Popish and Protestant doctors, and that even Jesuit casuists find a mortal sin in playing at cards.

(6.) It is base gain when people stand at nothing, whether credit or conscience, if they can but reach it. Thus many reckon gainsweet, whatever way they can get it. They will debase themselves to the meanest things to win a little thing, without any necessity. They will toil themselves excessively for what is very inconsiderable; and if charity and gifts be going, they will without necessity put in for their share, to the great prejudice of those that are truly needy, and cannot help themselves. These and all other ways of base gain are forbidden here as stealing.

*3dly*, This command is broken by family-frauds and robbery. For in this case one's enemies may be those of their own house. These family-frauds are committed.

(1.) By the husbands spending and wasting their money or goods, to the detriment of their wives and children. It is abominable robbery for men to ware that on their lusts, which should serve the necessities and conveniences of their families, as it falls out in the case of drunkards, adulterers, and mismanagers. But worst of all, while they themselves

are kept full, and their poor families sadly pinched, 1 Tim. v. 8.

(2.) By wives embezzling and putting away their husband's goods to his loss, by which means a man may soon be stolen off his feet, as we term it. It is quite contrary to the character of a virtuous woman, Prov. xxxi. 12. 'She will do him (her husband) good, and not evil, all the days of her life.'

(3.) By children embezzling and taking away their parents money or goods without their consent. There is no doubt a child may steal from his parents, seeing he is not proprietor of their goods, Prov. xxviii. 24. Though they think they may take at their own hand, God's word says the contrary.

(4.) By servants wronging their masters in their substance that is among their hands. By their employment and trust, they have occasion to steal from their masters, if conscience engage them not to honesty. And so they may be guilty by taking of their master's goods, either for themselves, or to give away to others, Tit. ii. 9, 10.

(5.) *Lastly*, I will add by all such as tempt or encourage either husbands, wives, children, or servants, to wrong their relatives. These are deeply guilty; for, as we say, there would not be a thief if there was not a resetter, Psal. l. 18. Thus hostlers and others that entertain men to the prejudice of their families, steal from these families. Thus covetous neighbours, who have their intrigues with other people's servants and fawning flatterers that draw about people's houses, to make a prey, whether of simple wives, children, or servants, engaging them to rob their husbands, parents, or masters, to give them, are thieves in the sight of God, to be avoided as plagues and pests to a house, Prov. xxix. 24.

*4thly*, This command is broken by injustice and cheatery in bargains and commerce, 1 Thess. iv. 6. What is got in that way is stolen in God's account, Lev. xxv. 14. Thus men are guilty,

(1.) When they take advantage of their neighbour's necessity, either in buying or selling; as when a person is necessitated to sell a thing, the buyer takes the advantage to gain it much below the worth; or when the seller knows the buyer must needs have it, then to rack it above the worth to him, Lev. xxv. 14. Indeed, if the seller would not other-



wise part with the thing, but to answer that necessity, or the buyer would not otherwise take it, the case alters; for then parting with his money or goods in that case requires a rational compensation.

(2.) When the seller commendeth, and the buyer dispraiseth the wares, contrary to their own conscience and knowledge, that so they may over-reach one another, Prov. xx. 14. So no doubt the way of priggings so long before people come to the due worth, is an insnaring way of dealing.

(3.) When men take advantage of their neighbour's ignorance in buying or selling. This sometimes falls out in buying, when the seller knows not the value of the thing, but the buyer does, and so gets it from him far below the worth. Oft-times in selling, when the seller imposes on the buyer's ignorance, either by express lying, saying the thing is what he really knows it is not, or concealing fraudently the fault of it, as if, in selling a beast or any other thing, a man should conceal a known fault of the commodity, which he knows if the buyer knew, he would either not have it at all, or not at the price. In this case, men think it enough that the neighbour's eye is his merchant. But will ye apply this practice to the golden rule, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, Matth. vii. 12; and let conscience say if it be fair dealing or not, Lev. xix. 11. 'Ye shall neither do falsely, nor lie one to another.'

(4.) By adulterating of wares, mixing them with worse, to the prejudice, and without the knowledge of the buyer; the commodity perhaps good and sightly, where it appears to the buyer's eye, but full of refuse that is good for little or nothing, but to make weight, or fill up the measure, which he finds not till he is to make use of it. Amos viii. 6.

(5.) By using false weights and measures, Micah vi. 10, 11; or any deceit whatsoever about weights or measures, whether in buying or selling; as in the case where the party is absent, and therefore it is made scanty, or when men have one to buy with, and another to sell with, or whatever way men take to 'falsify the balances by deceit,' Amos viii. 5.

(6.) When that which is bought is not precisely delivered, but is vitiated; as by taking away a part of what is good in it, and making it up with what is worse; so that though they have the same weight or measure which they bought, yet it is not of the same goodness. This is direct stealth: for what

is once sold is no more ours; and with the same justice ye might take a shilling out of your neighbour's pocket, putting in a sixpence for it.

(7.) Unfaithfulness in not performing condition, Psal. xv. 4; when people make no conscience of keeping their word. This is not to be rigidly interpreted to involve men in guilt, when they use all moral diligence to perform their condition, but Providence puts a stop in their way; for in all promises of that nature, such an exception is to be understood; but when people have a sinful hand in not performing exactly according to promise.

(8.) *Lastly*, When payment is made with uncurrent money, consisting with the knowledge of the payer, Gen. xxiii. 16; or like Ananias and Sapphira, Acts v. keeping back part of the price; a base and unjust custom with some, who still eat up a part of what they are obliged to pay, Prov. iii. 27, 28.

*5thly*, This command is broken in fellowship, when people trade together, or have a common interest in one room together, and in the management thereof defraud and go beyond one another; which is the rise and spring of many brawls and grudges that neighbours have against one another, Lev. vi. 2; So in over-stenting of ground beyond what falls to their share, shifting to bear proportionable burdens to their profit, breaking over any of the conditions of their fellowship, and raising their own gain out of their neighbour's loss, and many such things which men do to others that they would not have done to themselves; and therefore are pieces of injustice, and sorts of theft, here condemned.

*6thly*, It is broken in the matter of neighbourhood, as by removing marches or land-marks, Prov. xxii. 28; carelessness to keep our neighbours from skaith by us, whereas justice requires we should be as loath to do wrong to our neighbours, as to receive it from them. Far more when it is done designedly, as for people to stand and feed their beasts on their neighbour's grass, at times when they know they cannot be caught in the thievish act. And of this sort is the turning out of beasts in the night-time, when there is no probability but they will be in their neighbour's skaith, though they resolve to rise early, and set them right ere they can be noticed.

*7thly*, It is broken in matters of trust. Treachery under trust is amongst the worst pieces of injustice. Thus men

are guilty when they give hurtful counsel to those that trust to them, and so betray them; when partners in trading are unfaithful one to another; when men have other people's business among their hands, their substance or their work, and prove unfaithful, because it is in the power of their hand. But the worst of all this sort is unfaithfulness to poor orphans left to men's care and tutoring, whom many hard hearts can treat most unjustly, to their loss or ruin, and to the bringing of a curse on themselves, God being the Judge of the fatherless in a special manner.

*8thly*, It is broken in the case of hiring many ways. As, (1.) When men wilfully or carelessly abuse a thing which they have hired, it is a piece of injustice. So men may be guilty in abusing the house they dwell in, or the horse they ride on, or the land they possess. (2.) When hirelings make no conscience of working honestly for their wages, as when they take wages for work, they have not skill to manage to the advantage of those that employ them; or when they spend time carelessly, and are not diligent for the advantage of those that employ them; and much more when they designedly work slightly for their own greater gain. (3.) When the hireling is defrauded in the matter of his wages, either by keeping it from him altogether, or not giving it him in due time, when it is in the power of our hand, or paying him with any insufficient thing, Jam. v. 4:

*9thly*, This command is broken in retaining instead of restoring what is not ours, but our neighbour's. Thus men are guilty in concealing of things found, and withholding them from the right owners when they are known, whom, according to the weight of the matter, they should be at pains to know; much more when, being found, it is dispatched so as our neighbour can never have it again, Deut. xxii. 1, 2; So in all cases where restitution is necessary, the retaining is a continued theft; for what we have taken away from others, we should be ready to restore. Indeed the party's giving of it takes away the necessity of restitution, and that though it be but rationally presumable that they do not desire such restitution.

*10thly*, It is broken in the matter of borrowing and paying again. As, (1.) When people make no conscience of restoring what they have borrowed for their use, or preserving it entire, that it be not notably the worse of them:



Borrowing and lending is a necessary bond of society among neighbours ; and as lenders are obliged to be neighbourly, so borrowers should be so too, Exod. xxii. 14. (2.) Refusing to help our neighbour, by lending where our own affairs will spare it, and he is in straits, Matth. v. 42; and particularly a rigid standing at a distance from all lending to those that are low in the world, and under a particular strait; for in that case, I shewed before that it is a duty to lend to such, such a portion of money or goods as we can well bear the loss of, though never repaid, Luke vi. 35. (3.) Not paying our just debts, if we are able, Psal. xxxvii. 21. And of this sort is borrowing what we are in no probable condition to pay. (4.) The staving off of payment, and shifting it, and obliging people to vexatious law-suits for the recovering of their due ; for that is a sort of robbery, Prov. iii. 30; And so is the involving people in law-suits for an unjust debt. (5.) *Lastly*, Extortion in compensation for loans, Ezek. xxii. 12; which we call usury or ocker, Psal. xv. ult. and the requiring of all our debts rigidly, without mercy or compassion, Isa. lviii. 3.

*11thly*, It is broken by an uncharitable use of what is our own. The sovereign Proprietor of the world may do what he will; but so may not we, that are bound to use what is ours in the way of charity towards our neighbour. This is done many ways, particularly by the two following, taken notice of in the Larger Catechism on this command.

(1.) By unjust inclosures and depopulations, that is, inclosing of grounds and dispeopling them, whereby it comes to pass that houses are pulled down, and families cast out, to make room for beasts or so; and so the country is dispeopled, and some one, or a few, are built up on the ruins of many, Isa. v. 8. Micah ii. 2.

(2.) By ingrossing commodities to enhance the price, whereby one gets such a commodity all in his own hand, so that he makes all that need it depend on him, and makes his own price as he will, seeing people cannot mend themselves at another hand. Such is the hoarding up of corn and other necessary things for a dearth, that they will not sell when people stand in need of them, Prov. xi. 26.

*12thly*, It is broken by oppression, when a man, by his own power, favour, or interest, bears down his neighbours, either thrusting them from their right, or with-holding them

from their due, or stretches beyond what his own right and title will warrant him, to the prejudice of a weaker party. Thus magistrates may oppress their subjects, masters their servants, landlords their tenants, and one powerful tenant or neighbour his weaker neighbour. This is a horrid sin in the sight of God, for men to use their power to distress others that are weaker than they. It is a sort of murder, condemned in the sixth command, Micah iii. 2, 3. and of theft or robbery, condemned in the eighth, Ezek. xxii. 7.

*13thly*, It is broken by partaking with thieves or unjust persons, Psal. l. 18. and partakers in sin may lay their account to be partakers in plagues with the sinner. Now, partakers with thieves or unjust persons are,

(1.) All that encourage and tempt them to it: these directly concur to the guilt.

(2.) All that receive or harbour stolen goods, Prov. xxix. 25. Such are all that join with them to hide what is taken away from their neighbours; such as wittingly and willingly take them from them as gifts, or that buy them from them, because they get a round pennyworth; but they are the dearest ever they bought, if they knew the matter as it is; such as wittingly and willingly receive the profit of them; so the husbands, wives, children, and servants, are guilty of the theft of their relatives in that case. Doubly deceitful and cruel are they who receive the pickeries of children.

(3.) Such as do not hinder it when it is in their power; when people see a person at that soul-ruining trade, and let them be doing; certainly know them guilty, and yet will not so much as tell them of it prudently; though perhaps they will spread it to others, and then set their foot on it.

*Lastly*, This command is broken by unmercifulness to the poor, shutting up our bowels of compassion against them, which locks up the hand from giving them in their need. I shall say two things of it.

(1.) It is a complication of many sins in one. For,

[1.] It is a theft, Eph. iv. 28. It is a taking from them what is their due by the law of God: for though we have the right of property in our own goods, the truly poor have a right of charity in them, so far as they need and we can spare.

[2.] It is ingratitude to God, who has given us so much, and yet in that case we will not part with a portion of it,

when he requires it back by the poor, his receivers. It is the Lord himself that asks of us by the poor, and it is horrid ingratitude to refuse him, Mat. xxv. 40, 41.

[3.] It is perfidiousness in the stewardship which God has committed to us, Luke xvi. 10. as if a steward should use all for himself, and starve his master's family.

[4.] *Lastly*, It is a sort of murder, 1 John iii. 15,—17. For as the fire may be put out by with-holding fuel, as well as pouring water on it; so a man's life may be taken away by denying him the supports of life, as well as by cutting his throat.

(2.) So it brings on a complication of strokes from God.

[1.] It is a moth in what a man has, and directly tends to poverty and want, Prov. xi. 24, 25. for what men thus hold together, God in his anger scatters. [2.] It is inconsistent with the love of God, 1 John iii. 17. and the want of bowels to the poor is the want of pure religion before God, Jam. i. ult. [3.] *Lastly*, As men deal with the poor unmercifully, so they may expect God will deal with them, Prov. xxi. 13. Jam. ii. 13.

Thus I have gone through the duties required, and the sins forbidden in this command, as they occurred. But a tender conscience, in applying of this command in practice, will find much more than what I have said. And when we come to the light of the Lord at the great day, things will be seen required and forbidden in it (I doubt not), that neither you nor I have thought of. Who can understand his errors? O what need of the blood of Christ, and grace to repent, and turn from our evil ways!

I shall now shut up my discourse on this command with two dehortations.

FIRST, I would dehort all and every one from stealing. Let every one abhor this sin. Let such as have stole, steal no more, but repent. I wish there were no ground to insist on this; but I am convinced that there is. I shall,

1. Offer some motives to press the forsaking of this sin.
2. Consider some occasions of it, and expose them.
3. Point out the remedies against it.

FIRST, I shall offer some motives to press the forsaking of this sin.

1. Consider how shocking it is to nature's light, that



teaches us to do to others as we would be done to. So that if conscience be but in the deadthraw with the thief, and not quite dead, he is judged and condemned from within in the very act. No wonder the heart quake, and the hands tremble, when they are put out, over the belly of the conscience, to that unlawful gain.

2. Consider the reproach of it. How disgraceful a name is that of a thief? If conscience have no weight with people, may they not regard their credit? Do not people regard to be hissed at by others? Job xxx. 5. It is true, they hope to carry it secretly; but how often is it seen that a bird of the air carrieth the voice, and they are surprised one time or other with shame covering their face?

3. It quite mars your acceptance and communion with God. The thief excommunicates himself from the presence of the Lord. He may pray to God, but God will not hear him; may come to sermons, but there is nothing for him there but words of anger. Judas was a thief, and both preached and prayed; but had no intercourse with God in these exercises. When the thief brings in the stolen goods, God goes out; and is not that a sad exchange, and are not the things stolen dear wares? And while he enjoys the sweet of it, it is mixed with the vinegar of God's wrath; till he repent, and restore too, if he be able, he can have no more access to God than the murderer while he has his sword in his neighbour's body, or the adulterer while his whore is in his arms, Jer. vii. 9, 10.

4. Nay, it brings down a curse instead of a blessing. While he swallows down these goods, the curse goes down with it, which will choke him at length. It brings a curse on him, and that he has otherwise, Zech. v. 2,—4. Sometimes it works on his own substance like a moth, and what he has decays, and do what he will he is always poor. Sometimes it works like a lion, so that though he have a full life of it a while by the gains of unrighteousness, yet at length all is swallowed up from him together, either by the hand of God or of men. However, it makes always a blasted, withered soul.

5. *Lastly*, It will ruin people eternally. The thief is liable to three tribunals. (1.) Of the state, seeing the laws of the land strike against it. Theft is punished with death, how equitably, I shall not say; for there seems to be no propo-

tion betwixt men's goods and lives. Pickery, or small theft, is punished arbitrarily, with disgrace enough. (2.) Of the church : for the discipline of the church ought to strike against it, and they are censurable for it even to excommunication, 1 Cor. v. 11, 12. But it is for the most part so cleverly carried, that neither church nor state can touch them. But they will not escape. (3.) The tribunal of God, who is a Judge that will not want witnesses to prove the fact which no eye saw, while himself is omniscient, and there is a conscience within men's breast. And therefore I, as a messenger of that Judge, the eternal God, do in his name and authority summon, arrest, and bind over, every stealer, and partaker with stealers, hearing me, or that should be hearing me this day, to answer it before the tribunal of God ; denouncing the eternal vengeance of God and everlasting damnation against them, to be assuredly executed against them if they repent not in time. And let the timber and stones of this house, and every one of you, be witnesses to this execution, to be produced when they and I shall stand before that tribunal, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. And O but it is dear bought that is got at the rate of eternal burnings !

SECONDLY, I shall consider some occasions of this sin, and expose them.

1 Solitude, people dwelling alone, which gives them fair occasion to play their tricks. It is marked of that graceless place Laish, Judg. xviii. 7. that they were far from neighbours. Such a solitary place we live in ; and readily solitude produces either great saints or black devils, as in other things, so particularly uncleanness and thievery ; and therefore the night is the thief's time, because of the solitude of it. It is no small business to keep a clean conscience on a hill head or in a glen, or in the black and dark night, where there is an occasion of sinning.

But O consider, that God's eye is on you at all times and in all places ! and whatever solitude ye may have to sin in, ye will be called to an account before the throng of the whole world, angels and men, and in broad day-light.

2. Poverty becomes an occasion of it, through the corruption of men's hearts, Prov. xxx. 8, 9. Graceless poor bodies can hardly think but they have a dispensation to steal.

But surely God, who will not have the persons of the poor respected in judgment, Lev. xix. 15. never gave a dis-

pensation to them to steal, but commands them to be content, and to seek for his sake what they have not, and cannot want. Poor thieves are thieves as well as others; and I doubt not but it is that which keeps some always poor, Job xxx. 3.—5. It is true, Solomon says, that as his temptation is stronger, his guilt is less than others, Prov. vi. 30; but still he is guilty, ver. 31.; and all that can be expected from this is to have a less hot place in hell than others; and that is but cold comfort.

3. Idleness and laziness, Eph. iv. 20. There is a generation that will not ply themselves, work and win, and they cannot want, and they must steal. They idle away their time when they might be provided as others are, and then the time comes that they cannot want, and they steal from their neighbours what they provided for themselves with the sweat of their brows.

Ye have two sins to account for here, your idleness and stealth; the one will not excuse, but aggravate the other. Ye make yourselves a prey to the devil; and when the devil finds you idle, it is no wonder he puts work in your hands.

4. A fair and easy opportunity meeting with a covetous heart. When there was a wedge of gold lying for the up-taking before Achan, he could not hold in his hands. People that have a mind to steal in such a place, need not go off their own field, or from their own flock, to steal; their neighbours goods cannot be kept from mixing with theirs, and there is an opportunity to the wish of a covetous heart.

But if people would think with themselves, Now, God in his holy providence is trying me, now the devil is waiting for my ensnaring: shall I sin because I have an opportunity? May not God send me to hell then, having such an occasion against me?

5. The smallness of the thing. They think it is but a small thing the owner may well enough spare that, it will not do him much harm. It is but this and but that.

But be what it will, it will make thee but a thief for stealing of it. And wilt thou sell thy soul for such a small thing? The way of sin is down the hill; let the devil get in a finger, and he will have in his hand next. He that for a little will sin, will mend his service if the devil will mend his wages. At first perhaps it is but a bit of meat, then a parcel



of peats, then a quantity of fodder, and then a sheep, and so on till they come to the gallows here, and to hell hereafter.

6. The difficulty there is in finding it out. It is a work of darkness, which there use not to be witnesses to, and so the man or woman defies the world to make out any such thing against them; and so they go on without controul, boasting like Ephraim, ‘He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me, that were sin,’ Hos. xii. 7, 8.

But O what avails that? Will ye defy the God of heaven, and your own conscience, to make it out before the tribunal? and then ye say something. Till then thou art a criminal before God, and dreadful shall thy doom be. But take heed, they have been discovered that thought themselves secure because no eye saw them. When a man’s day comes to fall in such a course, God can infatuate him, that he guides not his matters with common sense.

7. *Lastly*, Bearing with them. I will not meddle with them, says one; and I will not meddle with them, says another; let them fall in another’s hand, and so on it goes. Justice, is neglected, neighbours are robbed, the souls of the guilty are ruined, and others involved in their sin, that might prevent the progress of it, and will not. It is marked of that Laish, that there was none in it to put it to shame. Judg. xviii. 7. Respect to men’s credit more than to their consciences, is like the tender mercies of the wicked, that are cruel.

THIRDLY, I come now to point out some remedies against this sin.

1. Let the guilty flee to the Lord Jesus Christ, for his blood and Spirit, to wash away their guilt, and take away their sin. They are no more beyond the reach of mercy than other gross sinners are. In the catalogue of the Corinthian sinners, were thieves; and yet we are told, that they were washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, 1 Cor. vi. 10, 11. Put the covetous heart in his hand, that he may take it away.

2. Labour to awe your hearts with the dread of the all-seeing God, whose eye is ever on you; and remember, that

for all these things ye do God will bring you into judgment.

3. Labour to be content with your lot, Heb. xiii. 5; Be content with little, if it be your lot. A little will serve nature, grace will be content with less; but lust will never have enough.

4. *Lastly*, Lay more stress on the quality than the quantity of what ye have. A little with God's favour, in a righteous way, is better than much with the wrath and curse of God.

SECONDLY, I would dehort from all injustice and unrighteous dealing whatsoever, in all the ways I have shewn that the eighth commandment may be broken, besides by direct stealing, and any other way whatsoever. Be precisely upright and just in all you do, and do nothing to others that ye would not have done to you. For motives consider,

1. Whatever you gain by any unjust way, it is indirectly stolen, it is stolen in effect. Therefore God forbids all these, under the name of stealing. And there is good reason for it; for no right can be founded in wrong. Injustice can give no man a title to what is his neighbour's before God; and therefore what you have of him unjustly, is still his, and ye are fraudulent and wrongous possessors of it, as well as if ye had directly stolen it.

2. Just and upright dealing is necessary to prove you to be saints, Psal. xv. 1, 2. It is true, it will not prove it alone; men may be just to their neighbours, and yet be no saints. But he can be no saint that makes not conscience of it, be his profession and practice in religion otherwise what it will. This is clear, if you consider,

(1.) Righteousness towards men is an essential part of the image of God, Eph. iv. 24, 25; And as the half-image is no image, so piety without righteousness is not God's image, nor true piety. Will God ever regard what we give him, when we make no conscience what we take from our neighbour?

(2.) Without it our service to God is but half-service, Luke iv. 74, 75; and that can never be sincere, Psal. cxix. 6; In regeneration, God writes his law on the heart, and not shreds here and there of the first table: so that where righteousness, a principal duty of the second table, is not, the law of God is not written there.

3. That injustice in professors of religion gives a deep

wound to religion itself, Rom. ii. 22, 24; And indeed that religion which does not make men just neighbours to deal with, can hardly be thought to make them saints. That craft, cunning, and fraud, used by many, how inconsistent is it with Christian simplicity, the fear of an all-seeing God, and contempt of the world, which religion teaches.

4. How opposite is it to the nature of God, who is just and righteous, and whom we must follow as dear children? The unjust stand in direct opposition to him who cannot but do right. God has a special love to righteousness, Psal. xi. ult. and all injustice is an abomination to him. He has set a particular mark of abhorrence on it, Micah vi. 10, 11. 'Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?' And he has also set a particular delight in just dealing, Prov. xi. 1; 'A just weight is his delight.'

5. It brings a blasting curse along with it, Prov. xiii. 11; 'Wealth gotten by vanity, shall be diminished.' And although it may prosper for a while, it will have a foul hinder end, Prov. xx. 21; 'The end thereof shall not be blessed.' It is as a moth in the man's own labours, and sometimes eats away his substance, makes wings to it that it leaves him, and often hurries him away from it. That is a heavy word, Jer. xvii. 11; 'He that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.'

6. It leaves a sting in the conscience, which will be felt to smart sooner or later. Conscience is the deputy of a just God in the soul, which will be able sometimes to act its part, and both accuse, convince, condemn, and torment the unjust dealer, so that he will be ready to throw away his unjust gain, as willingly as ever one ready to be burnt did live coals out of his bosom, and as Judas did his thirty pieces of silver, though perhaps it may be out of time. A Pythagorean bought a pair of shoes upon trust: the shoemaker dies: the philosopher is glad, and thinks them gain: but a while after his conscience twitches him: he repairs to the house of the dead, casts in his money with these words, 'There, take thy due; thou livest to me, though dead to all besides.'

7. *Lastly*, It will exclude you out of heaven. There is a



bar drawn on all unrighteous persons, that they cannot come there, 1 Cor. vi. 9. The treasures of eternal glory are lost by unrighteous dealing in the world, Luke xvi. 11. Where then is the profit, though a man gain the whole world? It is sad gain where a thousand times more is lost by it. Peace with God and conscience is lost by it; the soul is lost by it, and that for ever. And they who walk not by the rules of justice in the world, shall lie under the strokes of divine justice eternally.

The occasions that ensnare men into stealing might be repeated here, as occasions of other pieces of injustice. But to fence you against this evil, I offer these things.

1. Consider your unrighteous nature, and carry it to Christ to be healed by him. When Adam's nature, and ours in him, was corrupted, it was wholly so, not only with respect to the first, but the second table. There is need, then, that the plaister be as wide as the wound, Eph. iv. 24. And he that would remove the bitter streams, must apply to get the fountain sweetened.

2. Accustom yourselves to acknowledge the Lord in your civil actions, Prov. iii. 6. The want of this betrays men into much unfair dealing; for where there is so little of God, there must be much of the devil.

(1.) Eye God in these matters, as he who is your witness, and will be your judge in them. Set the Lord before you in your business, and you will fear to step wrong. May be thou canst wrong thy neighbour, and he shall not know it. But God knows it, and it cannot be hid from him. May be he cannot right himself for want of witnesses; but pray remember, that God and thy own conscience are witnesses to all that passeth betwixt you and others. And though ye may think it is long to that court-day, yet remember that awful declaration, Mal. iii. 5. 'I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts.' May be thou canst bear him down from his right, but mind the wronged party has a strong avenger, 1 Thess. iv. 6. O how well might it go, if men in all their bargains, work, neighbourhood, &c. would set God thus before them!

(2.) Eye God in these matters as the fountain of strength. Alas! most men have no diffidence in themselves in these affairs, but trust themselves as in no hazard there, and thus are the betrayers of themselves, Prov. xxviii. 26. The least of duties are too much for us alone, and in the plainest way we will go wrong, if we be not led right. Satan has snares laid for us in these things; and therefore we have need of strength from the Lord to resist them.

3. Remember ye are not only to seek your own, but your neighbour's welfare, Phil. ii. 4. Selfishness is the cause of much unfair dealing. 'Lovers of themselves more than God,' and exclusively of our neighbour, are in bad condition. For a man to build up himself on another's ruins, is contrary to that love which we owe to our neighbour, as fellow-partakers of the human nature, and as members one of another as Christians, Eph. iv. 25. The goodness that is most diffusive and communicative, is most like God.

4. Consider the vanity of the world. It is an overvaluing of earthly advantages that leads people aside into unrighteous ways, Hos. xii. 8. A due impression of the vanity and emptiness thereof, would let you see that they are not worth a man's going off his way for them. It is not long till very little will serve us; death comes, and we have no more to do with it, a coffin and a winding sheet, and a little room in the heart of the earth, which none will grudge us, will be all we will need. What madness is it, then, to wound the conscience for such a pitiful business? All the gains of unrighteousness will never quit the cost.

5. Labour to mortify the lust of covetousness, which being indulged, the conscience will get sore stretches to satisfy it, Heb. xiii. 5. It cannot miss to pierce people through with many sorrows. Therefore 'love not the world,' 1 John iii. 15; for whoso follow it too closely at the heels, it will dash out their brains at last.

6. A little well gotten is more worth than much otherwise, Prov. xvi. 8. There is a blessing in the one, a temporal one at least; but there is a curse in the other. A man may use the one with a good conscience; the other is with an ill conscience, and that is a sad sauce to the meal. The one a man has on free cost, having nothing to pay for it; the sweet of the other is squeezed out by a dear reckoning following.

7. *Lastly*, Remember the day is coming wherein all wrongs are to be righted, secret things brought to light, and open violence reckoned for. If men were to have no after-reckoning for these things, they might do in them as they list; but thou shalt be countable for the least farthing. The Judge is infinitely wise, and the most cunning and tricky will not get him outwitted nor shifted. He is omnipotent, and they who force their way now through all bands of justice, shall not be able to make head against him. In all temptations that way, then awe your heart with that meditation, ‘What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?’ Job xxxi. 14.



## OF THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.

EXOD. xx. 16.—*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

THE scope of this command is the preservation of truth amongst men, which is a necessary bond of human society. And forasmuch as all the commands of the second table relate to ourselves as well as others, the meaning of this is, Thou shalt not bear false witness either against thyself or thy neighbour, and so neither wrong thy own nor thy neighbour’s good name.

The positive part of this command is implied in the negative, viz. Thou shalt bear real and soothfast witness (as our law terms it) for thyself and thy neighbour, and so maintain thy own and thy neighbour’s good name, so far as truth will allow. This witnessing is to be understood not only of judicial, but extrajudicial witnessing.

*Quest.* ‘What is required in the ninth commandment?’

*Ans.* ‘The ninth commandment requireth the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, and of our own and our neighbour’s good name, especially in witness-bearing.’

I shall consider this commandment, as it relates,



- I. To truth betwixt man and man in general;
- II. To our own good name; and,
- III. To our neighbour's good name;

I. As it relates to truth betwixt man and man in the general. Truth is a sacred thing, which we are to cleave to as we would to God, who is true essentially, and therefore called truth itself. It was a notable saying of a philosopher, that truth is so great a perfection, that if God would render himself visible, he would chuse light for his body, and truth for his soul. He was not far out, for the scripture tells us of Christ, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, that he is the light, and the truth. And, on the other hand, it holds out Satan as the prince of darkness and father of lies. And there is a mighty affinity betwixt light and truth, darkness and lies. Truth is to the soul as light to the body; and they that walk in the light, will walk in truth. Now, this command requires the maintaining of truth. We may take up this in these two things.

1. We must speak truth at all times when we speak, Eph. iv. 25; 'Speak the truth every man with his neighbour.' I say when we speak, for we must not be always speaking. Nature having drawn a double bar on our tongues, teaches that our tongues must not be in our mouths as a loose window in the wind, ever clattering. And if discretion keep the key of the door of our lips, we will not be of those that cannot rest till all the truth that is in be out, Prov. xiv. 33; But we must never speak any thing but truth.

What is truth? Pilate asked the question at Christ, but did not stay for an answer, John xviii. 38; Truth is a harmony, a double harmony. Anatomists observe, that the tongue in man is tied by a double string to the heart. To speaking of truth is required, (1.) A harmony of the tongue with the heart. (2.) A harmony of the tongue with the thing itself.

(1.) If we think not as we speak, we do not speak truth; the discord betwixt the tongue and the heart mars the harmony, Psal. xv. 2; We must speak as we think, then, and the tongue must be a faithful interpreter of the mind, otherwise it is a false tongue. So truth may be spoken by a man, and yet he be a false speaker, because he thinks not as he speaks.

(2.) But that is not all : if we do not speak also as the thing in itself is, we do not speak true. For there must be a harmony betwixt our hearts and the thing as it is in itself. For we must not think that our mistaken apprehensions of things can stamp lies to pass current for truths, just because we think them so, 2 Thess. ii. 11.

The sum of the matter lies here : It is our duty to speak truth, that is, so as our mind agree with the matter, and our mouth with our mind. We must speak things as we think them to be, and think them to be what they are. And hence we may see that modesty is very necessary to preserve us in the truth, in this our weak and dark condition. Self-conceited ignorance, and weakness joined with confidence, whereby people are so peremptory in their own uptakings of things, without any regard to the different light of others, is a great enemy to truth.

2. We must especially speak the truth at sometimes, that is, in witness-bearing. This is twofold.

1st, Witness-bearing in judgment. This command requires us to bear witness, and that faithfully, when called thereto. Now, we are to speak the truth judicially, when we are lawfully called thereunto, by the authority, whether of church or state.

2dly, Extrajudicial witness-bearing, wherein a man is called to declare the truth, though there be no human authority obliging him thereto, as often falls out in the case of private controversies betwixt neighbours, where a third person is desired to witness the truth. Yea, a man may be obliged to this witness-bearing where he is not so much as desired to speak, as when we hear our neighbour charged with any thing unjustly, we are obliged to vindicate his innocency, it being known to us.

Now, the rule in both these cases is this, that then is a man or woman called to declare the truth under the pain of God's displeasure, when God's glory or their neighbour's good may be procured by it ; when the dishonour of God and their neighbour's hurt, either of soul, body, name, or goods, may be avoided by it.

Both these sorts of witness-bearing are necessary for the maintaining and promoting of truth, the honour of God, and our neighbour's real good, though it appear perhaps to

be for his hurt, in discovering of his wickedness, or the wrong done by him, Zech. viii. 16.

In judicial witness-bearing, God calls men to witness the truth, by the mouth of those to whom he has given authority, making them either gods, or ambassadors for God on the earth. And therefore to decline it in that case, is to decline the divine call, and mar the course of justice, Isa. lix. 14; and so the honour of God and the good of our neighbour.

And in the other case there is a real call from the Lord unto it, as we tender his honour and our neighbour's welfare.

Neither ought people to scare at witness-bearing judicially, because of the oath of God; for a lawful oath, imposed by lawful authority, for the honour of God and the good of our neighbour, is a duty whereby we worship and glorify our God, Jer. iv. 2; Now, in this case of witness-bearing.

1. It is our duty to tell the truth; and, (1.) Not to conceal it, or any part of it known to us, which may make for the clearing of the matter in question, 2 Sam. xiv. 18, 19, 20; that is, to tell it fully. (2.) Freely, not being awed by any person, or any evil that may thereby come unto us by the guilty or otherwise, 1 Sam. xix. 4, 5. (3.) Clearly, not mincing, obscuring, and wrapping up the truth, so as they who hear it know not what to make of it, Josh. vii. 19. (4.) Sincerely, 2 Chron. xix. 9; without any influence of malice, or partial counsel, without feud or favour.

2. It is our duty to tell nothing but the truth; that were to bear false witness with a witness indeed. Truth stands in no need of lies to support it, Prov. vi. 19.

II. As it relates to our own good name, we are to maintain and promote it. It should be every body's care to procure and maintain their reputation; for a good name is a very precious thing, which we should love and be careful of, Prov. xxii. 1; And they who value not their reputation, will hardly be found to value either their souls or bodies. Now, it must be cared for and maintained in words, and by deeds.

*First*, In words, and that these three ways.

1. By speaking nothing but the truth concerning ourselves. They that seek a name to themselves by lying and boasting, ordinarily lose what they have, instead of getting more, Prov.



xxv. 14; And they that would preserve their name, let them be careful of their word, to fulfil their lawful promises, Psal. xv. 4.

2. By concealing prudently those secrets concerning ourselves which we are not obliged to discover. They sin against God and themselves who unnecessarily give another their reputation to keep, Prov. xxv. 9, 10; ‘Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another; lest he that heareth it, put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.’ This is not to be extended to the concealing of scandalous sins, which people are lawfully called to confess: for in that case the name of a confessing penitent is better than that of an obstinate scandalous sinner, Prov. xxviii. 13; ‘He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.’

3. By defending our good name when it is unjustly attacked, as our Lord did, when he said to the Jews, ‘I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me,’ John viii. 49; It is a tender point to be wounded in; and if it be done wrongously, we are enemies to ourselves, if we use not all means competent to clear ourselves.

*Secondly,* By deeds, we are to care for it practically.

1. If we would maintain our good name, let us not do evil things. An ill name will follow an ill life; who can help it? If a man steal, let him thank himself that his good name is lost. A vile practice will at length make a man’s name stink.

2. We must not do what is like evil, 1 Thess. v. 22; They who take a liberty to themselves in suspicious practices, throw away their own reputation. And if they be innocent as to gross things, they are in the nearest disposition to be guilty. We should follow the apostle in this case, Phil. iv. 8; ‘Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.’ Julius Cæsar having divorced his wife, was called to witness against her; and being interrogated, declared he knew nothing of the business; and being asked, Why then he had put her away? Because, said he, I would have all my relations as free from the suspicion as the guilt of a bad action.

III. As it relates to our neighbour's good name. We are to maintain, and promote it too, as far as is consistent with truth. And for this cause there is required of us,

1. A charitable opinion and esteem of our neighbours, 1 Cor. xiii. 7; being ready to hope the best of them, unless the contrary be evident.

2. A desire of, and rejoicing in, their good name and reputation, Rom. i. 8; We are to love them as ourselves, and therefore should be glad of the sweet savour of their name, though their reputation outshine ours.

3. Sorrowing and grieving for their faults, 2 Cor. xii. 21; The blasting of any body's name by their sins, should make us mourn, and the rather that the same root of bitterness is in all naturally: and they are the deeper in God's debt that get through the world with an unblemished reputation.

4. Covering of their infirmities with the mantle of love, 1 Pet. iv. 8; Every body has some weak side, and needs a cover from others in love: and it is a dangerous business to aggravate and blaze abroad this to their dishonour.

5. Freely acknowledging of the gifts and graces that are in any, 1 Cor. i. 4,—7; As none are so good but they have some discernible infirmity, so hardly is one so bad but there is some one thing or another praise-worthy in them. And if it were but one thing, it is our duty frankly to own it.

6. Defending of their innocence, as Ahimelech did David's, 1 Sam. xxii. 14; 'Who is so faithful,' says he, 'among all thy servants, as David, which is the king's son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house?' It is necessary and just to defend the innocent, especially if absent, against the poisonous bites of a viperous tongue lest we be held consenting to the tongue-murder of him, in God's account.

7. An unwillingness to receive an ill report of them, and a readiness to admit a good report of them, 1 Cor. xiii. 6, 7. Psal. xv. 3; Love readily opens the door to a good report of our neighbour, but is not very hasty to let in an evil one, being truly sorry if it should be true.

8. Discouraging of tale bearers, flatterers, and slanderers, who go about gathering all the filth they can find to throw upon the name and reputation of others. These should be discouraged as the pests of human society, as David did,

‘Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour,’ says he, ‘him will I cut off,’ Psal. ci. 5.

9. *Lastly*, Watching over one another giving sound and seasonable admonitions, checks, and reproofs, for what is ill or ill like in others, Lev. xix. 17; and telling themselves of it, so as it may not be blabbed out without necessity: whereby both their souls might be timely preserved from the snare, and their good name preserved too.

Having thus given a view of the duties required in the ninth commandment, I proceed to consider what is forbidden in it.

*Quest.* ‘What is forbidden in the ninth commandment?’

*Ans.* ‘The ninth commandment forbiddeth whatsoever is prejudicial to truth, or injurious to our own or our neighbour’s good name.’

The sins forbidden in this commandment are here reduced to three heads.

1. Whatsoever is prejudicial to truth.
2. Whatsoever is prejudicial to our own good name.
3. Whatsoever is prejudicial to our neighbour’s good name.

These I shall consider in order.

I. This command forbids whatsoever is prejudicial to truth. The God of truth has set this command as a hedge and fence about truth, that it be not wronged. For it cannot be prejudiced but by the same means that we wrong God and our neighbour too. Now there are two cases in which truth is apt to suffer hurt.

*First*, Judicially, in judgment, in judicatories, whether ecclesiastical or civil. There truth is to make its most solemn appearance, Zech. viii. 16; and lies there are most sinful. The judges judge for God, and so the solemnity of the thing ought to strike the greater awe on all to do or say nothing prejudicial to truth. Now truth is prejudiced in judgment, and this command broken.

1. By judges when they pervert judgment, respecting persons, and passing unjust sentences, Prov. xvii. 15. calling evil good, and good evil, and rewarding the righteous as the wicked, and the wicked as the righteous: and iniquitous laws can never bear men out in this, Isa. v. 23. and x. 1.

2. By the complainer, while he falsely accuses or charges



another, Luke xix. 8; forges writs, Psal. cxix. 69; or suborns false witnesses, Acts vi. 13.

3. By the defender, when he denies a just charge, being called to a free confession, Prov. xxviii. 13. And seeing judges are set to judge for the Lord, this must be reckoned a lying to the Lord.

4. By the witnesses, and that when they either conceal the truth, not discovering freely and fully what they know, or when they tell any thing that is not truth, Lev. v. 1. Prov. xix. 9. And thus people may prejudice truth, when they keep up what might make the truth appear, and the cause go right in judgment.

5. *Lastly*, By the pleaders, while they appear for an unjust cause to bear down truth and justice, Acts xxiv. 2, &c.

*Secondly*, Extrajudicially, in common conversation and otherwise. Wheresoever we go, we should carry truth along with us; but out of judgment truth is often prejudiced; and that these three ways.

1. By unfaithfulness in conversation, when people slip the bond of their word, and make nothing of breaking lawful promises, Rom. i. 31. A man ought to value his word highly, as a man, and much more as a Christian. That is a sad complaint 'There is no truth in the land,' Hos. iv. 1; when men do with their promises as an ape with its collar, slipping it on and off as it sees meet.

2. By undue silence. Strange is the disorder that sin has brought into the world; as in the tongue, which is often going when it should be quiet, and often quiet when it should speak. Our tongues are our glory; but they are often found wrapt up in a dark cloud of silence, when they should be shining forth. Truth is prejudiced by silence, when the honour of God, or the good of our neighbour, either in the way of justice, or charity, calls for the discovery of it. Thus men sin against God, the truth, and their neighbour, when they hold their peace, (1.) When iniquity calls for a reproof from them. (2.) When it calls for a complaint to, or giving information thereof, unto others, Lev. v. 1. Deut. xiii. 8. God has given men a tongue as a banner to be displayed for him. To run away then with flying colours, in such a case, is very dishonourable to God, and dangerous to ourselves, Mark viii. 38. It is most injurious to our neighbour, whom we think so to gratify, being a snare to his soul, Lev. xix. 17;

and to ourselves, by involving us in their guilt, Eph. v. 7, 11.

3. By undue speaking. The world is a world of iniquity, and several ways speaks to the prejudice of truth. Truth may be prejudiced thus,

(1.) By speaking it unseasonably. Truth hath suffered much prejudice by the unseasonable venting of it: therefore people must take heed, not only what but when they speak; for ‘there is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak,’ Eccl. iii. 7. ‘A fool uttereth all his mind; but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards, Prov. xxix. 11.

(2.) By speaking truth maliciously, as Doeg did. It was both unseasonable, while Saul was in a rage against David, 1 Sam. xxii. 8, 9; and malicious, Psal. lii. 2, 3. This is the way how the devil speaks truth; as he stirred up the damsel possessed with a spirit of divination, to cry concerning Paul and Silas, ‘These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation,’ Acts xvi. 16, 17; and this very maliciously, as the context shews.

(3.) By perverting of truth to a wrong meaning, as the false witnesses did against Christ, Matth. xxvi. 60, 61. What he spoke of his body, they turned it to the temple of Jerusalem. So it is not enough that we speak truth, but it must be seasonable and charitable too.

4. By equivocal expressions to the prejudice of truth or justice; in which the sense goes doubtfully, either true or false. Of the same nature are mental reservations. Thus Isaac sinned in denying his wife, and calling her his sister, Gen. xxvi. 7, 9. They are indeed lies, an untruth, spoken with an intention to deceive; for words must be taken according to the common use of them, and answers are understood as given according to the question. The devil, who is the father of lies, brought this manner of speaking into the world, Gen. iii. 5. and that way he was wont to deliver his oracles; for he never speaks truth, but either maliciously or equivocally, as he moved the false prophets to speak in the affair of Ahab’s going up to Ramoth-Gilead, 1 Kings xxii. 6, 12.

5. *Lastly*, By lies, Eph. iv. 25. Lying is prejudicial to truth, as darkness to light, and is from the devil. But observe some speeches that are like lies, but are not so.

(1.) Figurative speeches, though not literally true, are not

lies, as Christ's calling himself a vine, John xv. 1. Of this sort are allegories and fables, such as Jotham's parable, Judg. ix. 8; parables, Luke xvi; hyperbolic speeches, John xxii. ult; ironical speeches, Gen. iii. 22. 1 Kings xviii. 27. In the former the sense and meaning of them is agreeable to truth, and fables and parables are a sort of speech by pictures. In irony the gesture readily explains the meaning, 1 Kings xxii. 15.

(2.) The telling a part of the truth, and concealing another part of it, when there is no obligation on us from the honour of God or our neighbour to discover it, is not lying, 1 Sam. xvi. 2; for though we are never to tell but the truth, yet we are not always obliged to tell all the truth.

(3.) Speeches according to present intention, without prejudicing further liberty, as when one at table refuses such a thing, yet changes his mind, and takes it, or on importunity yields, as Gen. xix. 2, 3. 2 Cor. i. 17.

*Lastly*, Threatenings not executed when the condition understood is done, and promises not fulfilled when the condition is not performed. Now, these being set aside, consider,

1. Sometimes, though the words agree with the mind of the speaker, yet not with the thing itself. This is called a material lie, or an untruth, and is sinful, as disagreeing with the truth, Isa. lix. 13.

2. If the words agree not with the mind of the speaker, that is a formal lie, the tongue speaking contrary to what the mind thinks. Lies are of four sorts.

1. Jestings lies; that is, when a person speaks that which is contrary to the known truth, in a jesting or ludicrous way; and embellishes his discourse with his own fictions, designing thereby to impose on others. This they are guilty of who invent false news, or tell stories for truth, which they know to be false, by way of amusement. Hosea complains of this practice, chap. vii. 3. 'They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.'

2. Officious lies; that is, when one speaks that which is contrary to truth, and the dictates of his conscience, to do good to himself or others thereby, or with a design to cover a fault, or excuse ourselves or others, Job xiii. 7. 'Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him?' Rom. iii. 3.



3. Pernicious lies; that is, when a person raises and spreads a false report with a design to do mischief to another. This is a complicated crime, and the worst species of this sin, a thing which is an abomination to the Lord, Prov. vi. 17.

4. Rash lies; that is, when a person uttereth that which is false through surprise, inadvertency, and customary looseness, as in the case of the tidings brought to David, that Absalom had slain all the king's sons at the entertainment he had provided for them at Baal-hazor, 2 Sam. xiii. 30.

Concerning all these species of lying, we may say, that God is a God of truth, but the devil, the father of lies, who incites men to imitate him in this ancient hellish trade, by which he destroyed the founders of the human race; that the word of God expressly condemns every kind of untruth; and that people should never reckon that a small thing which will land the transgressors in hell, Rev. xxi. 8.

II. This command forbids whatsoever is injurious to our own good name. We ought all to be very careful of our reputation, and not to bear false witness for or against ourselves. Now, people may be guilty of the breach of this command with respect to themselves,

1. In their hearts, either by thinking too meanly of themselves, or too highly. Though people can never be too humble, yet they may be too blind to what God has done, for them; and there may be a great deal of bastard self-denial, which hinders men to be thankful to God, and useful to others, as in the case of Moses, Exod. iv. 10,—14. But the most dangerous extreme is thinking too highly of ourselves, Rom. xii. 16: This is a most dangerous piece of false witness, which the false heart gives in favour of self.

2. In their actions, when people either do evil, or that which at least is evil-like. When Eli's sons lost their tenderness, and gave themselves to debauchery, they lost their good name. An unsavoury report followed their vicious and base life, 1 Sam. ii. 24. And there are such things as are of evil report, suspicious practices, evil-like things, that though they be not the worst of things, yet they make way for them; by these, persons throw away their good name, Prov. v. 8, 9. and witness against themselves, that they are untender and vicious persons, in a near disposition to the greatest evil.

3. In words. And thus men may be guilty by,

(1.) Bearing witness against themselves unnecessarily, without a due call, discovering their own secret faults and infirmities, especially to those who have no true sense of piety, but are ready to improve the same to the reproach of them, or of religion, or both, Prov. xxv. 9, 10. ‘Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another: lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.’

(2.) Bearing false witness against ourselves, as accusing ourselves unjustly, denying the gifts and graces of God in us, as Job says, chap. xxvii. 5, 6. ‘God forbid that I should justify you: till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.’ Pride often puts people on this, that they may appear the more humble. But humility never teaches men to rob God of his praise, or to lie against the truth. Lying against our minds can never be good, though it seem to humble us.

(3.) Bearing false witness for ourselves. Thus people are guilty, upon being duly called to confess their sins, they deny them, hide them, and, over the belly of their conscience, cause their tongues witness for them, Prov. xxviii. 13. ‘He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.’ It is sad witnessing when the conscience within tells people they are lying.

Of this sort is vain-glorious boasting and bragging. There are some, who, when they speak of themselves, are sure to speak very big, as the Pharisee did, Luke xviii. 11. A man or woman that is a boaster, will be found to be a liar ordinarily. They will boast of what they have not, or of doing what they never did, Prov. xxv. 14. ‘Whoso boasteth of a false gift, is like clouds and wind without rain.’ Yea, some will accuse themselves of wickedness which they did not commit, for the pleasure that they take in boasting of mischief. And where the man has any ground to walk on in his boasting, he is a liar in magnifying it, as was the case of the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 12. It was one of the basest offices for a man to trumpet his own praise: It is a great evidence there is little in him, that he makes so much noise with it. Such are in the black roll, 2 Tim. iii. 2.

III. I come now to consider this command as it forbids what is injurious to our neighbour and his good name. We

may contract guilt in injuring our neighbour, over the belly of this command, several ways.

*First*, In our hearts ; for all the commands of God reach to the heart as well as the outward man. We are injurious in our hearts to our neighbour's good name, by,

1. Unjust suspicions of him, 1 Tim. vi. 4. Thus Potiphar injured Joseph, suspecting him of that villainy which he was far from. Christ bids us beware of men, and so not to be credulous. But there is a medium betwixt vain credulity and evil groundless suspicion, which fills men's heads with a foresight of what others will do when they have such and such temptations, from no light but that of their own uncharitable spirits.

2. Uncharitable judging and condemning of others in our hearts, Matth. vii. 1. The prevailing of the censorious humour amongst us, is a speaking evidence of this waspish disposition, which is a compound of pride, rashness, harshness, lightness, and emptiness, directly opposite to the love and charity that we owe to our neighbours, which ' beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things,' 1 Cor. xiii. 7. I grant, that to call an evil action an evil thing, and an habitual grossly profane life a mark of a prophane heart, is no breach of charity, Gal. v. 19. But to lash men in our hearts, beyond what the habitual frame of their lives gives ground for, is that uncharitable judging.

It is the product of pride and self-conceit ; for the man makes himself the rule, so all that is beyond him, or does not reach his length, must fall under his condemnatory sentence ; he invades the throne of God, setting up one for himself in his neighbour's heart, not confining himself to his outward actions, Rom. xiv. 10. It is rashness, flowing from want of consideration ; it is harshness, carrying their judgment farther than the matter will bear ; it is lightness and emptiness, for they are confident of that which really they do not know. How confident were the barbarians, upon seeing the viper fasten on Paul's hand, that he was a murderer! &c. Acts xxviii. 4. Thus men condemn the actions of others, merely from their own rashness, as Eli did Hannah ; and, which is worst of all, they will judge their state before God from things utterly unable to bear the weight of their presumptuous sentence, as Job's friends did ; and thrust in themselves to the secrets of their hearts, as those mentioned, Rom.



xiv. 4. 'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?' judging their consciences: the like whereto was the horrible judgment some have expressed touching those that took the oath of abjuration, that they had gone over the belly of their conscience, and in other cases too. If you think that I am speaking for it, ye are uncharitable: but I would not for the world judge other men's consciences at that rate. It is sufficient for me to condemn men's evil actions which I see, not to judge their consciences, which I neither see nor can see. Were the impressions of the tremendous tribunal of God more on men's spirits, they would not be so hasty to judge before the time.

3. Misconstructing of others, their intentions, words, and actions. No innocence can be a safeguard against that temper, which is always ready to give the worst turn to the intentions, words, and actions of their neighbour, which they are capable to bear. It is like the corrupted stomach, that corrupts whatever is put into it. See Neh. vi. 6. Rom. iii. 8. Psal. lxxix. 10.

4. Contempt of others in our hearts, undervaluing and thinking basely of them; when men stop their eyes from beholding whatever is praise-worthy in their neighbour, and gather together what makes against them, and sit brooding on that. This is evil in all cases, but especially where men condemn others for what is good in them, 2 Sam. vi. 16. We are even in our hearts to give every one their due; and so far as we withhold it, we are guilty, Luke xviii. 9, 10, 11.

5. Envy and grieving at the just and deserved credit or reputation of any. This is a most unchristian and truly Pharisaical temper, Matth. xxi. 15. It is the nature of envy to torment a man with the good of his neighbour. What refreshes the charitable spirit, vexes and frets theirs. They are like the moon that turns pale and wan whensoever the sun begins to shine above the horizon. But if men loved their neighbour as themselves, and their God more than themselves, they would rejoice at their neighbour's reputation, though it should outshine their own, Numb. xi. 29.

6. Rejoicing in the disgrace and infamy of others, Jer. xlviii. 27. This is a devil-like sin, for dust is the serpent's meat. Whatever mischief befalls men is the devil's delight: and so there are many, that if a black cloud be thrown over the reputation of others, it tickles their hearts, they have a

secret satisfaction in it ; their hearts say within them, Aha! so we would have it And many vent their satisfaction in outward rejoicing at it.

7. *Lastly*, Fond admiration of men, Jude 16. As the former are sins in defect, so this is a sin in excess. And indeed we become guilty by thinking too highly and above what is meet of any man, as well as thinking too meanly of them, 1 Cor. iv. 6. This is both a sin and a snare; for those whom we fondly admire, we are apt to imitate in evil as well as good, and so to follow them to the prejudice of truth. It is a sad evidence of the corruption of a man's heart, that he is ready either to idolize or else to despise others.

*Secondly*, In our lives and actions. Men may injure the good name of others without speaking a word against them.

1. Men may be guilty of the breach of this command, to the prejudice of their neighbour's good name, by bare gesture of the body, Prov. vi. 13. 'He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers.' A man may with a wink, a nod, a grave look, a sigh, &c. stab another's reputation, filling others by these means with suspicions of him unjustly; or when one is slandered in our presence, making such signs which import our consent thereto.

2. Drawing others into things that are ill or evil-like, and of bad report. Thus many ruin one another's reputation, till they are made as rotten things laid one upon another, which corrupt each other, till both send forth a stinking smell, Matth. xviii. 7. They that lay the stumbling-block, and they that fall over it, are both ruined together, though double vengeance abides them who ruin others together with themselves.

3. By not hindering what we can in others those things that procure an ill name. The evil that befalls others which we might have prevented, will justly be laid at our door. This brought the judgments of God on good Eli and his house too, so that they went all to ruin together, 1 Sam. iii. 13. The Spirit of God records, for the justification of poor Tamar, the care she had of preventing the ill name of herself and of Amnon, 2 Sam. xiii. 12, 13. So that neither by terror nor allurements she could be drawn into the villainy, though she was forced, which was her misery, but not her sin.

*Thirdly*, In our lips. The tongue is the principal mischievous instrument whereby people ruin or wound the good name of others. And here come in the sins of the tongue against our neighbour in a special manner. Thus men injure their neighbour,

1. By silence, when they forbear to speak what they ought and can for the credit of their neighbour. Thus men may wrong others by their silence in their neighbour's cause while he is aspersed, Prov. xxxi. 8. for in that case silence is consent. As also when their neighbour is justly commended, the entertaining thereof with silent looks, as if they knew something that may justly mar his reputation. If that be not the sense of it, it reflects on the silent person as grudging the reputation of the person commended.

2. Our neighbour may be injured by sinful speaking; and this command may be broken many ways.

(1.) By unnecessary discovering of the faults and infirmities of others. O how much guilt is contracted this way, by people's going in the way of cursed Ham. Gen. ix. 22. unavailing instead of vailing the weaknesses of others, without any necessity, but to the lessening of their reputation.

(2.) By aggravating of their lesser faults, Matth. vii. 3, 4. 5. Men see motes like beams in the eyes of others, while beams are as motes in their own. It is a mischievous tongue that, counting the faults of others, for fifty sets down a hundred, and still looks to them through a magnifying glass. Had we the dexterity of aggravating our own as we have of aggravating the faults of others, we would be happy, because very humble people.

(3.) By reviving the memory of our neighbour's crimes which were worn out of mind, especially being repented of. Thus many vent their malice against others by casting up their former faults to them, as Shimei did to David. Truth it may be, but it is uncharitably and maliciously spoken, for which the speaker must give an account to God.

(4.) By betraying of secrets committed to us. It is true, if the honour of God and the good of our neighbour require the discovering of a secret, in that case, as we ought not to promise, so we ought not to conceal it. But when we have lawfully promised to keep it, either expressly or tacitly, we sin against truth, justice, and friendship, to betray it. And though there be no promise in the case, yet when the reveal-



ing of it tends to the detriment of our neighbour, it is sinful, Prov. xvii. 9. 2 Tim. iii. 4.

(5.) By detracting, or endeavouring any manner of way to impair the deserved credit of our neighbour, Ezek. iv. 12, 13. This is the native result of envy and ill-will at our neighbour; for those who cannot endure others to sit on high, where they are deservedly placed, will go about one way or other to undermine them.

(6.) By evil reports to the prejudicing of our neighbour unjustly. In these many are involved in guilt. [1.] The raiser of it, Exod. xxiii. 1. Satan has the mouths of many at command for a forge of ill reports, who strike that hellish coin with their stamp, that it may pass for current. [2.] The receivers and spreaders of it, who are guilty here as well as the raiser; for they are to the raiser as the receiver to the thief: Report, say they, and we will report. If others will gather filth, they will throw it on their neighbours faces, and yet are not innocent, though they can give their authors, Neh. vi. 6. See Psal. xv. 3.

(7.) By slandering, which is an ill report without all ground. Psal. l. 20. This the venom of a wretched tongue, made use of to kill and bury alive the innocent. It has been the trial of the people of God in general, and seldom if ever do any of them escape without it. Satan loves by his agents to vomit out against them reproaches and slanders, wherewith their good name may be blasted, and especially if religion and the cause of God can be wounded through their sides. The scourge of the tongue is a sharp scourge.

(8.) By backbiting and whispering, Rom. i. 29, 30. Both agree in that they speak evil behind men's back, accusing them, and loading them with reproach when they are not present to answer for themselves. The backbiter does it openly, and the whisperer does it secretly.

(9.) By tale-bearing, Lev. xix. 16. This is a sort of pedlar-trade for the devil, driven by many whose work it is to carry tales out of the house or company where they happen to be; and these are the wares they have to vent in other houses or companies, where they will be ready to take up new clashes and tales to where they go next. These are the plagues of society, like Satan sowing discord among brethren. Hence secret grudges against one another, and none

knows wherefore; and when they are searched to the furthest, it is all grounded on some talebearer's credit.

(10.) By countenancing and encouraging of the black tribe of slanderers, backbiters, &c. Prov. xxix. 12. If these merchants for hell got not their wares taken of their hands, they would be ashamed of their trade, and forced to quit it. But many are as ready to take them off their hands as they are to deliver them.

(11.) By stopping our ears against the just defence of the parties lesed, as the malicious Jews did against Stephen, Acts vii. 57, 58. How rare is it to find a person as ready to receive a defence for, as an accusation against their neighbour?

(12.) By scornful contempt, and scoffing, and mocking of others. This was the way of Ishmael's persecuting of Isaac, Gal. iv. 29. These viperous tongues work upon the miseries of others, as the soldiers did at Christ in his sufferings, Matth. xxvii. 28, 29. The natural imperfections of others are their sport, though reproaching the poor they despise his Maker; yea, and their sinful imperfections too, for fools make a mock at sin.

Some have a mighty fondness for gibing and taunting; their whole converse runs that way, to make others uneasy and themselves merry with their taunts. Let them not value themselves on their talent; if any spark of tenderness be left in them, I doubt if they dare look to it as a good gift given them from above, but as an abuse of the good gift of God. It was Ishmael's way, for which he was cast out of the family of the faithful, Gal. iv. 29.

(13.) Reviling and railing, giving others reproachful and opprobrious names, piercing them with bitter words, and murdering them with their tongues, Matth. v. 22. 1 Cor. vi. 10. Revilers are among those excluded out of heaven.

These are some of the ways how the wicked tongue gives home-thrusts to others, and pierces like the piercing of the sword, following the example of him who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. But would ye see them all gathered together in one, ye have them in,

(14.) *Lastly*, Scolding and rating, an abominable disorder which we are so much disturbed with. There their wicked hearts, stirred up with passion and revenge, vomit out all at once this filthy stuff. For there their neighbour's faults are

unnecessarily discovered, aggravated, &c. as if hell's forces were rendezvousing betwixt them. Wonder not at the expression. See Jude 9. No, the angel durst not engage Satan with these weapons, whereof he was the proper master, and at which none can outdo him. If ye take not better heed to your tongues, they will ruin you, Psal. lii. 2,—5.

There are some other evils of the tongue here forbidden, the hurt whereof does not so plainly appear.

1. Talkativeness, or much speaking. Some are ever talking, and are never in their element but when prattling; and when once they loose, it is as hard to stop them as to stop a flood, and turn it another way. Of it I say,

(1.) It is a sign of a loose and frothy heart, where the fear of God hath little place, Eccl. v. 2; for that would make our words few, true, weighty, and useful. When God has given us two ears, and but one tongue, that we may be swift to hear and slow to speak, it is a pregnant evidence of a naughty heart, to be swift to speak and slow to hear.

(2.) It is the fool's badge, Eccl. v. 3. Talkative persons, for want of acquaintance with themselves, thinking to shew themselves wise, ordinarily present a fool to the company. They will have a flood of words, who have hardly a drop of good sense or judgment; so that they are just a voice, and no more. They that are given to much speaking, can hardly speak either true or well; which made an orator ask a double fee of a talkative scholar, one to learn him to speak well, another to learn him to hold his peace. It is the character of a virtuous woman, that 'she openeth her mouth with wisdom,' Prov. xxxi. 26. Her mouth is not always open, but duly shut, and discreetly opened.

2. Idle speaking, Matth. xii. 36. The tongue was given to man to be for the honour of God, and the good of himself and his neighbour. Though our words, then, be not evil in themselves, they are evil because they are idle; that is, words spoken to no good purpose, tending neither to the honour of God, nor the good of ourselves or others, neither to his moral good, to make him more holy, nor to his civil good, as not being upon the necessary concerns of human life, nor his natural good, to maintain the moderate cheerfulness of society. It may be comprehended under foolish



talking, rash, raving, and impertinent discourse, doing no good to the hearers, but bewraying the folly of the speaker.

3. A trade of jesting, Eph. v. 4. It is not sinful to pass an innocent jest for begetting of moderate cheerfulness. The wise man tells us, 'There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh,' Eccl. iii. 4. It may in some cases be as necessary to cheer the spirits, as a cordial is to restore them, or a pleasant gale of wind to purify the air. It was not unbecoming the gravity of the prophet to mock Baal's priests, and to say, 'Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey; or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened,' 1 Kings xviii. 27. But sinful are,

(1.) Offensive jests, which tend to the shewing a despising of our neighbour, to the irritating and provoking of him. And indeed it is often seen, that those who are much given that way, their conversation is most offensive, sparing neither friend nor foe, and will rather lose their friend than their jest.

(2.) Profane jests, either making a mock of sin, or of that which is holy, particularly wresting and abusing of scripture, to express the conceits of their light and wanton wits. It is a dangerous thing to jest in such matters.

(3.) People's being immoderate in jesting. To make every word a jest, is liker the stage than Christian gravity. This is as absurd as to present a man a dish of salt to feed on; a little of it is good for seasoning, but to give it for the whole entertainment, is absurd.

4. *Lastly*, Flattery, Psal. xii. 3. This is a most dangerous stroke, and the more deadly that the wound it gives does not smart, but by it a man is hugged to ruin. The words of a flatterer are smoother than oil, yet are they in effect as drawn swords. It is a compound of lying, abjectness of spirit, and treachery. The flatterer gives the praise that is not due, professes the kindness that is not real, and screws up all to a pitch far above truth; and so he is a liar. He debases himself to please others, turning himself into every shape to humour the party he is to flatter; and betrays him into self-conceit and unacquaintedness with himself.

I shall shut all with a twofold dehortation.

*First*, Speak truth, and beware of lying. Lying is a very common sin; repent of that guilt, and beware of it for the future. For motives, consider,

*Mot.* 1. That God is the God of truth, the Author and

Lover of truth, so that he cannot lie; and therefore lying is most contrary to the nature and mind of God: it is therefore singularly abominable and hateful to him, Psal. x. 6. Prov. vi. 16. 17; We find that God suffered Adam's sons to marry their own sisters, and the Israelites to spoil the Egyptians of what they had borrowed of them; but never did the God of truth at any time dispense with men's speaking lies. Hate that abominable thing, then, which God so hates.

2. All lies are from the devil in a special manner, John viii. 44; It was he that first broached lies in the world, and ruined mankind with them; and having sped so well with that engine of hell at first, no wonder he sets himself to keep up the trade. He is the father of lies, that begets them in the false heart, and they are brought forth by the lying tongue. Whom do liars resemble then, the God of truth, or the father of lies?

3. Lying is a part of the old man of sin, which must be put off, if we would not be put out of God's presence, Eph. iv. 24, 25; It is the way to which our corrupt natures do kindly and quickly incline, Psal. lviii. 3; 'The wicked go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.' Hence children are not to learn this; they have the art of it from their first father Adam. But as soon as grace enters the heart, it rectifies it in that point. Hence the Lord's people are called 'children that will not lie,' Isa. lxiii. 8.

4. There is a meanness or baseness in lying beyond what is in other common sins, either because it proceeds from fear, or tends to deceive. Hence liars themselves cannot endure to be called liars; the baseness of the sin being so much acknowledged in the world, that though many bring forth and cherish the vile brat, none can endure to be reputed the father of it. And no wonder it is reputed such a base thing; for when once a man is known to make no conscience of truth, he has lost his credit, and is looked upon as a man that cannot be bound with the common ties of society, nor trusted.

*Lastly,* It will bring God's wrath heavily on the guilty, Prov. xix. 5, 9: A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape. A false witness shall not be unpunished; and he that speaketh lies shall perish.' God's truth is impawned for the liar's destruction,

even eternal destruction. Shall liars have access to heaven? No, they are barred out from thence, Rev. xxi. ult. ‘There shall in nowise enter into it any thing that—maketh a lie.’ Their lodging is appointed to them in another place, with the devil the father of lies, in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, Rev. xxi. 8. and xxii. 15.

I shall give you a few advices.

1. Strike at the root of lying, and so the fruit will wither and come to nought. The great root of all is the corrupt nature, that needs to be mortified by grace from Jesus Christ. There are also particular lusts on which lies depend. Labour to be humble, for pride and self-seeking occasions many lies, as the boaster’s lie. Some are founded on covetousness, as the lies in bargaining; some in fear, slavish fear of men, as denying of truth; some in the vanity and rashness of our natures, whereby lies come to be broached without a formed design.

2. Accustom yourselves to few words, for ‘in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin,’ Prov. x. 19; It is but just with God, that idle words be punished by suffering people to fall into lying words.

3. Remember that God will discover truth; and that his eye is upon you at all times. And though ye may deceive others with your lies, ye cannot deceive the omniscient God. He is witness to the truth, and will call you to account for your contradicting of it. And indeed the trade of lying is hard to keep up without discovery. Liars had need of good memories. ‘A lying tongue is but for a moment,’ Prov. xii. 19.

*Lastly*, Curb lying in young ones, out of pity to their souls, and care of their credit when they come to years. For some get such a habit of it when they are young, that there is no mending of them when they grow old.

*Secondly*, Beware of carrying an evil tongue. The lying tongue is contrary to truth, the evil tongue to charity and love to our neighbour, being employed in slandering, backbiting, reproaching, reviling, scolding, &c. For motives,

*Mot.* 1. Consider the woful perverseness that is in an evil tongue. God gave man speech, which he denied to other creatures, that by his tongue he might glorify God, and do good to himself and others, Psal. lvii. 9, 10; Shall we thus



turn our glory into shame, and pervert the ends of speech? How just were it that we were struck dumb?

2. It is a murdering instrument. I observed to you before, that an ill tongue is a parcel of murdering weapons, a bow and sharp arrows to pierce, a sword to stab, and a fire to devour others. Yea, Solomon observes, that death and life are in the power of the tongue. It is a fire that kindles strife and contention in all societies, and turns them into confusion; and oft-times returns heavily on the head of those who carry it. The tongues from heaven were cloven, to be the more diffusive of good; but those fired from hell are forked to be the more impressive of mischief.

3. Consider the wickedness of it. It is a world of iniquity, Jam. iii. 6; They have much ado that have an ill tongue to guide, a world of iniquity to guide. It is a broad stream from the fountain of the wickedness of the heart.

4. An unbridled tongue cuts off all pretences to true religion, Jam. i. 26; For where the fear or love of God and our neighbour is in the heart, it will be a bond on the tongue to keep it within the bounds of Christian charity.

5. We must give an account of our words at the day of judgment, Matth. xii. 36, 37.

*Lastly,* An ill tongue will ruin the soul. Bridle your tongues; however unruly they be, they shall be silent in the grave. And, if repentance prevent it not, the day will come that they will be tormented in hell-flames, Luke xvi.

I shall conclude with an advice or two.

1. Begin at the heart, if ye would order your tongues aright. Labour to get them cleansed by the sanctifying Spirit of Christ. Study love to God and your neighbour, which are the fulfilling of the law. Labour for meekness, and patience, and humility, which will be the best directors of the tongue.

2. Set yourselves, in the faith of promised assistance, to watch over your hearts and tongues. Unwatchfulness is dangerous in the case of such an unruly member as the tongue is. God has guarded it naturally. Do ye also watch it.

## OF THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.

EXOD. xx. 17.—*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.*

THE scope of this command is to strike at the root and first risings of sin in the heart, in the desires going out of their right line of purity and equity. It is a strict boundary set to the unbounded desires of the heart.

In it, there are, 1. The act, 2. The object. The act, *Thou shalt not covet*, or *lust*, as the apostle terms it, Rom. vii. 7; which implies an inordinateness of desire, a feverish motion of the soul towards the creature, irregular and disorderly; and so a dissatisfaction with one's present condition, as appears from Heb. xiii. 5; 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have.'

The object is held forth particularly for example's cause, *thy neighbour's house, thy neighbour's wife*, his servants, and goods. Thou shalt not only not take away thy neighbour's house from him by oppression, nor entice away his servants, nor steal his goods, nor entertain a fixed and deliberate desire to do him that injury, as is forbidden in the eighth command; but the inordinate desire of having them shall not rise in, nor go through thy heart, however lightly, if it were like a flying arrow, saying, O that his house, his servant, his ox and ass were mine! Thou shalt not only not defile his wife, nor deliberately desire to do it, as is forbidden in the seventh commandment; but thou shalt not say in thine heart, O that she were mine! though thou hast no mind, right or wrong, to make her so.

This object is held forth universally, *nor any thing that is thy neighbour's*: whereby it appears, that this command looks through all the other commandments of the second table, and so condemns all inordinate desire of any object whatsoever. And therefore the Papists dividing this command into two is absurd, and but a trick invented to atone for their

confounding the first and second. While this command says, *nor any thing*, it says, Thou shalt not only not dishonour thy neighbour by insolent and contemptuous behaviour, but there shall not be a desire in thy heart, saying, O that his place and post were mine, as in the fifth command; nor, O that I had his health and strength, as in the sixth; nor his reputation and esteem, as in the ninth; though you have no deliberate design or desire to wrong him in these.

I do not wonder, if some are surprised at this, and say, Are these sins? for indeed this command goes deeper than the rest; and if it did not so, it would be superfluous; for you see it aims not at any new object, but holds by the objects of the former commands; therefore it must look to some more inward and less noticed motions of the heart, than the rest do. And therefore Paul, though he learned the law at the school of divinity under Gamaliel, a professor of it, yet, till he learned it over again at the school of the Spirit, holding it out in its spirituality and extent, he did not know these things to be sin, Rom. vii. 7. It was this command brought home to his conscience, that let him see that lust to be sin which he saw not before.

And seeing this is a command of the second table, and ourselves are our nearest neighbour, the lust or inordinate desire of those things that are our own must be condemned here, as well as lusting after what is not ours.

So much for the negative part of this command, which in effect is this, Thou shalt not be in the least dissatisfied with thy own present condition in the world, nor have any inordinate motion in thy heart to that which is thy own or thy neighbour's.

The positive part is implied; and that is, Thou shalt be fully content with thy own lot, whatever it be, and arrest thy heart within the bounds that God has inclosed it in, bearing a charitable disposition to the neighbour and what is his. For all covetousness implies a discontent with our own condition.

*Quest.* 'What is required in the tenth commandment.'

*Ans.* 'The tenth commandment requireth full contentment with our own condition, with a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbour, and all that is his.'



Here I shall consider the duty of this command, as it respects,

- I. Ourselves.
- II. Our neighbour.
- III. The root of sin.

I. I shall consider the duty of this command as it respects ourselves. If we consider, that this command forbidding coveting in the general, says, in effect, these two things, 1. Thou shalt not covet or lust after what thou hast ; nor, 2. What thou wantest ; the great duty of this command with respect to ourselves will appear to be twofold.

*First*, A thorough weanedness from and indifferency to all those things that we have, in which our desires may be too eager. There are some things whereof our desire cannot be too much, as of God, Christ, grace, victory over sin ; and therefore we read of a holy lusting, Gal. v. 17. The renewed part not only desires, but eagerly and greedily gapes for perfect holiness and entire victory over sin. This is holy lusting, where there is no fear of excess, although indeed even that may degenerate, when our own ease, that is disturbed by sin, may be more in our view than the sinfulness of sin ; and in this respect these lustings are mixed, and therefore sinful and humbling in the best ; and they are so far contrary to this command, as they are lusting after ease, more than conformity to the holy will and nature of God.

There are other things to which our desires may be carried out too eagerly and inordinately ; and the desire of them is lawful, but the coveting or lusting after them, which is the inordinate desire of them, is here forbidden. Thus we may sin, not only in the inordinate desire of sensual things, as meat, drink, &c. but in rational things, as honour, esteem, &c. The desire of these things is not sinful ; but there is a lust of them which is so.

Now, in opposition to this, we must be thoroughly weaned from and holily indifferent to these things, not only when we want them, for that falls in with contentment, but when we have them. So should one be to his own house, wife, servants, and any thing that is his ; keeping our love to, desire after, and joy in them, within due bounds, as the Psalmist did, Psal. cxxxi. 2. ‘ Surely I have behaved and quieted

myself as a child that is weaned of his mother : my soul is even as a weaned child.' We may take it up in these four things following.

1. The heart's sitting loose to them, so as the heart and they may fall asunder as things closely joined, yet not glued, when God shall be pleased to take them from us. For if they must needs be rent from us, it is an argument that our love to them was indeed a lust towards them. Therefore this disposition is called a hating of them, Luke xiv. 26 ; for things that we have, we can part with, without their tearing as it were a piece of our heart away with them. We can say little on this piercing command, but what will be accounted hard sayings, by all that have not a clear view of the transcendent purity of the law, which is carried to the height in this command, because to the root, the corruption of our nature. And that corruption we must still keep in view here, or we will do no good with it.

2. The heart's looking for no more from them than God has put in them. God has made created things as inns in the way to himself, where a person may be refreshed, but not as a resting-place, where the heart is to dwell. For the desire is inordinate when the man seeks his rest and satisfaction in these things instead of God, Psal. iv. 6. The corrupt judgment magnifies earthly things, and looks on shadows as substances ; and then the corrupt affections grasp them as such, and after a thousand disappointments lust after them still, Isa. lvii. 10.

3. The soul's standing on other ground, when these things stand entire about the man ; drawing its support from God as the fountain, even when created streams are running full, 1 Sam. ii. 1. Psal. xviii. 46. The world's good things must not be thy good things, Luke xvi. 25. Thou mayst love them as a friend, but not be wedded to them as a husband ; use them as a staff, yet not as the staff of thy life, but a staff in thy hand ; but by no means as a pillar to build on them the weight of thy comfort and satisfaction.

4. The using of them passingly. We must not dip too far in the use of them. Lawful desire and delight, like Peter, walks softly over these waters, but lust shines in them ; in the one there is a holy carelessness, in the other a greedy gripe. The apostle lively describes this weanedness, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. ' It remaineth that both they that have

wives, be as though they had none ; and they that weep, as though they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and they that buy, as though they possessed not ; and they that use this world, as not abusing it : for the fashion of this world passeth away.' The violent pulse of the soul in our high-bended hopes, perplexing racking fears, vehement love, swelling joy, and overmuch sorrow about these matters, is a sad symptom of the distemper of natural corruption that has seized all Adam's sons. The greedy appetite that the heart is carried with to these things, is a sad sign of an unweaned soul. A man may have a sinful lust to his meat, which yet is necessary to support his body ; and a lust in the using of it, as those of the old world, Matth. xxiv. 38. 1 Sam. xiv. 32. The dogs of Egypt, they say, lap the water of the river Nile running, for fear of the crocodiles ; for not only in every berry of the vine, but in all created things there is a devil. See how the Lord tried the people, Judg. vii. 6. ' And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men : but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

All these things the law requires in their perfection without the least mixture. Where is the clean man to cast a stone at the rest ? It must be on a very transient glance of the heart that men say, The world is not their temptation, they care not for the world. For a view of the spirituality of the law would make us see that the world is fixed in our hearts, and only grace can loose it at the root, and only death can cast it over the hedge.

*Secondly*, A full contentment with our own condition. As for the sin in our condition, it is not from God, and there is no good in it ; we are not called to be content with it, because it is not the condition which God set us in. But whatever else be in our condition, we are obliged to be content with it, because so is the will of God that we should be in it. Every one is to look on his condition, as the paradise that God has set him down in ; and though it be planted with thorns and briers, he must not look over the hedge ; for *thou shalt not covet*. Though that which is wanting in thy condition cannot be numbered, and that which is crooked cannot be made straight, yet none of these things must render us uneasy in the least. There is required a full content-



ment, without a discontented glance of the eye. Much goes to the making up of it, all here required.

1. Hearty renunciation of our own will, saying with the pattern of contentment, Not my will, but thine be done. We must no more be chusers for ourselves of our own lot; but as little children standing at the table, not to carve for themselves, but to take the bit that is given them. 'He shall chuse our inheritance for us,' says the Psalmist, Psal. xlvii. 4. Shall not Infinite Wisdom rule the world? This lies in three things.

(1.) We must not determine the kind or sort of our comforts, as we often do, like petted children, that will not have this the parent holds out, but that which they set their eye on. Like Adam, whom the fruit of the tree of life could not serve, but he would have the forbidden fruit. The desire of fruit was natural, therefore not evil; other fruit would have seryed that desire, if kept orderly; but the lusting desire could not want forbidden fruit. Rachael had a husband but she must have children too. Orpah must have a husband. Ruth wants both; but she determines nothing, but only she must have a God; and that she got, and both too.

(2.) We must not be positive as to the measure of our comforts; and there is no reason that beggars should be chusers. If the heart say, of our comforts, They are too little, and of afflictions they are too great, it flies in the face of this command, and of God's sovereignty, setting up for independency, 1 Tim. vi. 8. 'Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content,' though the food be coarse, though scanty, &c. Nature is content with little, grace with less, and sets no measure; but the measure of lust can never be filled.

(3.) We must not be wilful in any thing, 1 Tim. vi. 9: 'They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare,' &c. They that will have these things, and will not want them, will never be truly content till God's will be brought down to theirs; which will never be altogether; and if in a particular it come to be so, they will readily get their will with a vengeance, as the Israelites in the wilderness got. Psal. lxxviii. 29.—31. 'So they did eat, and were well filled; for he gave them their own desire; they were not estranged from their lust: but while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them and slew

the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.' Thus we must renounce our own will.

2. Absolute resignation to the will of the Lord, Matth. xvi. 24. 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' We must give over the war betwixt our will and the will of God, and our will must run as a captive after his triumphal chariot. His preceptive will is the rule of our duty; and his providential will must, with our consent, be the rule of our condition. Our will must follow his, as the shadow does the body, without gainsaying. If he will let us have a created comfort, we must be content to keep it; if not, we must be content to part with it. We must lie at the foot of Providence, as a ball before him that tosses it, to be thrown up and cast down as our God sees meet. This Providence will do with us whether we be willing or not; but if we are thus resigned, then our necessity is our obedience.

3. Entire submission to the will of God, 1 Sam. iii. 18. 'It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.' As they resign themselves to his disposal, they must stand to his decision in the case. We must no more dispute the sovereignty with God, but allow the divine will and pleasure to carry it over the belly of our corrupt inclinations, and be disposed of by him as the weaned child is by the nurse. If that which is crooked cannot be made straight, we must ply to it as it is; if our lot be not brought up to our mind, we must bring down our mind to our lot, as Paul did, Phil. iv. 11, 12. 'Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.' In this submission to the will of the Lord the soul of content lies. For God does not subject the man only, or cast him down, as he can do the most discontented person, making him walk with the yoke wreathed about his neck, whether he will or not. But the man voluntarily submits himself to God's disposal in the whole of his condition, whatever his wants be. Whatever be wanting in our condition, if we would be content,

1st, We must submit to them as just without complaining, as Cain did; saying with the prophet, Micah vii. 9.

‘I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.’ We meet with no hardships in our lot, but what we have procured to ourselves. And it is but just that we kiss the rod, and be silent under it. Let us complain of ourselves; why not? only leave our complaints there; but not set our mouths against the heavens; no, not in our hearts, for God knows the language of our hearts as well as our mouths. We must love his holiness and justice, in all the works thereof, though against ourselves. Nay more,

*2dly*, We must be quiet under them, without murmuring, as tolerable, Lam. iii. 27—29. ‘It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope.’ So was Job at first, though his corruption got up at length, Job i. 22. ‘In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.’ How often do we cry out of insufferable affliction? yet we do bear up under it for all that, and would bear the better if we could be content and quiet under it. A meek and quiet spirit makes a light cross, for a proud unsubdued spirit lays a great overweight upon every cross; as Rachael’s unquiet spirit made the want of children wonderfully heavy, which others go very quietly and contentedly under. Nay more,

*3dly*, We must be easy without those things we want, as things we can want, without anxiety to get them, Phil. iv. 12. Weaned hearts will be very easy without those things which others cannot digest the want of. What is the reason of so much uneasiness in our condition, but that we are wedded to this and the other thing; and being glad of the having of it we are exceeding uneasy at the parting with it, as Jonah was with his gourd? The contented man will be easy, and that not upon a sensible prospect, but on the faith of the promise, Phil. iv. 6. ‘Be careful for nothing: but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.’ But more than that,

*4thly*, We must be well satisfied and bear up comfortably under the want of them; standing upright when they are



gone, as we did when we had them, or would do if we had them; even as the house stands when the prop that it did lean upon is taken away, Hab. iii. 17, 18; 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olives shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' It is a sad evidence of the corruption of our nature, that woful lust after the creature that is bred and born with us, that our comfort waxeth and waneth, according to the waxing and waning of created enjoyments, and ebbs and flows as the breasts of the creature are full or empty. So, many lose all spirit and life in religion, when God pulls their worldly comforts from them; and even good people walk much discouraged and damped, not so much with the sense of God's anger, as the affliction in their lot. But what is yet more,

*5thly*, We must have a complacency in our condition, as what is good for us, otherwise we can have no full content. Observe the language of a contented mind, not only *just*, but 'Good is the will of the Lord,' Isa. xxxix. ult. Content suffers not a person to go drooping under God's yoke, but makes him carry it evenly with a sort of complacency in it. Wise men have a pleasure in the working of physic, though it gripe them sore, if their physician thinks it good for their health, and they think so too. And grace sometimes finds a pleasure in pain, and a paradise within the thorny thicket of afflictions. See how the apostle gathered olive-berries off the thorn-hedge of crosses, 2 Cor. xii. 10. 'Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecution, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong.' Ay, there is a refined pleasure there, to see how God stops the entry for provision, that lusts may be starved; how he cuts off the by-channels, that the whole stream of love may run towards himself; how he pulls and holds off the man's burden, that he may run the more expeditely in the way to heaven. Nay, more than all that,

*6thly*, We must have a complacency in our condition, as that which is best for us for the time. Though he take health from thee, wealth, relations, &c. How is that possible. It is not easy to do it, but you must endeavour to see

it; for that must be best that God judges best, and by the event it appears that God sees that condition best for thee for the time. Therefore we should meet it as David did Abigail, with ‘Blessed be the Lord that sent thee to meet me this day.’ So did Job, chap. i. 21. ‘Blessed be the name of the Lord.’ Faith in the promise makes it practicable. All the works of God are the most perfect in their kind. But to come to the top of the ladder, the full sea-mark of content.

*Lastly*, We must rest in that condition, without the least squint look for a change of it, till God’s time come. There must be no motion for it, but as heaven moves to carry our condition about with it. And so this hinders not prayer, nor the use of means, in dependence on God: but requires patience, faith, hope, and absolute resignation, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. In this sense he that believeth doth not make haste; that is, the unbelieving haste which cannot wait God’s time.

*Quest.* Is this full contentment possible? *Ans.* There is a twofold contentment: the one legal, which is full in the eye of the law; and this we can no more attain to than the perfect fulfilling of the law. It ceases not, however, to be our duty, and will be humbling to gracious souls so far as they come short of it. The other evangelical, which is full in the eye of the gospel, i. e. it is sincere: though it is not full in degrees, yet it is full in parts; it is in all the parts of contentment, though none of them are perfect; there is a submission to the whole will of God, though not perfect in degrees. And this is a necessary part of the new man, so that without it we are not sincere.

I shall now give reasons why we should be fully content with our own condition, whatever it be.

1. Because he that made the world guides it, and it is highly reasonable we allow it to be so. Let the discontented person answer that question which God proposes to sinners to silence their murmurings. ‘Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Matth. xx. 15. The world is made by the Lord; and shall he not govern it, and dispose of it and all things therein as he sees best? Must the clay be allowed to say to the potter, ‘Why hast thou made me thus? Should it be according to thy mind?’ Job. xxxiv. 33. Providence guides all, the Creator sits at the helm; and will not we be content with the course that is steered?’

2. Thy condition is ordered by Infinite Wisdom. There is nothing that befalls us without the providence of God; and that is no blind chance, but a wise disposal of all according to the counsel of God's will. If the product of Infinite Wisdom content us not, we do but shew ourselves headstrong fools. He that numbers the hairs of our heads, Matth. x. 30. no doubt keeps an exact account of all the crosses in our lot, and of every ingredient in our cross, and gives them all out by weight and measure, as may most suit his infinitely-wise ends. And it is the height of folly to impeach the conduct of Infinite Wisdom.

3. All the good that is in our lot is undeserved, Lam. iii. 22. The bitterest lot that any has in the world is mixed with mercy; and mercy is still predominant in our cup. It is true, discontented persons are like wasps and flies that look not near the sound parts, but swarm together on the sore place. They magnify their crosses, and multiply them too; but deal with their mercies as the unjust steward, instead of a hundred setting down fifty, and hardly so much. But let there be fair count and reckoning betwixt us and Providence, we shall find we are in God's debt, and every mercy we enjoy we have it freely and undeservedly from God's hand, Job ii. 10.

4. All the evil that we meet with in our lot, we deserve it, we have ourselves to thank for it, Lam. iii. 39. Shall men's hearts rise against God for what they have procured to themselves? Is it not a reasonable resolve, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him?' Mic. vii. 9. A discontented spirit will always be found an unhumiliated spirit, insensible of its ill deservings at God's hand.

*Use.* I exhort all to labour for a full contentment with their own condition. For motives to press this, consider,

1. The beauty of the rational world, under the conduct of Divine Providence, lies in every one's contentment with their own condition. One last shall as soon serve every foot, as one condition shall be agreeable to all. What confusion would be in the world, if there were not variety? If time were all day and no night, the moon and stars every one a sun, how would we be able to endure it. If the whole body were an eye, where were the useful and pleasant variety of members. And if all men were set under the same smiles of Providence,



where were the beautiful variety and mixture in the web of providence that inwraps the world. Let us remember we are in the world as on a stage, where one must represent a king and another a beggar. It is God's part to chuse what part we shall act ; and it is our business contentedly to act the part allotted for us.

2. Contentment makes a man happy and easy in every condition. It is the stone that turns all metals into gold, and makes one to sing and rejoice in every condition. A strong man will walk as cleverly under a heavy burden, as a weak man under a far lighter one, because of the proportion that is betwixt the strength and the burden in each. One man has his lot brought up to his mind, another has his mind brought down to his lot; is not the latter, than, as easy as the former is. All our uneasiness proceeds from our own minds; and could we manage them to a full contentment in every condition, no condition could make us miserable.

3. Time is short, and ere long we will be at our journey's end. The world's smiles will no more follow us, neither will the frowns of it reach us. Eternity is before us, and we have greater things to mind than our condition here. One traveller walks with a rough stick in his hand, and another with a cane: the matter is small which of them be thine, for at the journey's end both of them shall be laid aside.

*Quest.* How may we attain to full contentment with our own condition, in a gospel-sense. There are two sorts of persons to whom we speak, some in a state of nature, others in a state of grace. One answer will not serve both; for though unrenewed sinners may have a shadow of contentment, it is impossible they can have true Christian contentment in that state. They may have a sort of contentment from a careless easy humour, yea, they may reason themselves into a sort of contentment, as some Heathens did do. But true contentment with their condition they cannot have.

This is clear, if ye consider, that a restless heart can never be a contented heart; and seeing the heart of man is capable of enjoying an infinite good, and the whole creation is not capable to fill it, it follows, that the heart can never rest, nor be truly content, till it be so in God himself. Adam falling off from God, left us with a breast full of unsatisfied desires, because he left us seeking our satisfaction among the creatures,

which are dry breasts, and cannot fill the heart; so till the soul return to God, it can have no true rest nor contentment. We may say enough to stop the mouths of the discontented, whatever they be; but no considerations will avail to work true contentment in a person out of Christ, more than a hungry child will be reasoned into quietness while you give him no bread. Therefore the great and,

*First*, Direction for contentment is, that ye take God for your God in Christ, as he offers himself to you in the gospel. The great thing that ye want is a rest to your heart, and satisfaction to the unbounded desires thereof, to possess that which if you had, your desires would be stayed, and ye would covet no more. I know, your false hearts and your foolish tongues have said, O, if I had such and such a created thing, I would be content, I would desire no more! But when ye got it, was it so indeed? was there not still a want? So it will be to the end. But here is the way to contentment: Jesus Christ, in whom dwells the fulness of the Godhead, offers himself to be yours. Accept of him by faith and then the sun is up with you, and ye will be content, though the candles of creature-comforts be put out. The wise merchant is content with the loss of all when he finds the one pearl, but not till then, *Matth. xiii. 45, 46.* Thus the foundation of full contentment is laid. And so I may go on to shew you further how to attain it. Therefore,

2. Believe that God is your God in Christ; apprehend him by faith as your portion; and contentment with your condition will follow of course, though your condition be very gloomy, *Heb. iii. 17.* Full contentment with one's condition goes in equal pace with a man's clearness as to his interest in Christ. Let that be darkened, and he shall find himself grow more fretful and uneasy with crosses in the world. Let that be rising clearer and clearer, and the more clear it grows, his cross will grow the lighter, and easier to be borne.

If any should say, There is a particular thing in my condition that above all things I cannot be easy under; there is something I would have, and God sees it not meet to give it me: what shall I do to be content under it. I would say, be what it will, go to God, and make a solemn exchange of that thing. If he has kept that from you, he offers you as good and better, that is to say, himself, instead of it. And do you renounce that thing, and give up with it, and take

Christ instead of it; and having taken him so, believe that ye have him instead of it. Say, Lord, there is an empty room in this heart of mine, such a comfort would I have to fill it; but thou seest meet to refuse it; therefore I give up with it; thy will be done; but I take thyself instead thereof to fill up that room. And now I have made the exchange, and Christ is to me instead of that which I want. So shalt thou find thy heart satisfied. And if God see the comfort meet for thee, thou art then in the fairest way to get it too, Psal. xxxvii. 4.

This is the way of the gospel to full contentment, viz. the way of believing, by which all Christian duties are done, and gospel-graces are nourished in the heart. And to let you see the efficacy of these means for contentment, consider,

1. The heart of man is an empty hungry thing, that must be filled with something, and cannot abide want. Therefore it is, that when people miss their desired satisfaction in one thing, they go to make it up by another. Mordecai's not bowing to Haman discontented him, and he went to make it up by a revenge on all the Jews. But the misery is, there is a want in that thing too. It is like the putting of an empty spoon in the child's mouth, that may stop it for a moment; but as soon as it finds it is disappointed, and there is nothing in it, it falls a-crying again. Now, this directs you to that which infallibly makes up the want, and in which there is no want. And it is a sad matter, that those who have tried so many ways to make up their wants, will not try this too.

2. God is the Fountain of all perfection, and whatever is desirable in the creature is in an eminent way in God, Mat. xix. 17. If the sun shine in at your windows, ye do not complain for want of candle-light. If all the vessels in your house were emptied of water, and the fountain were brought into it, ye are at no loss, but in better case than before. Even so, if all created streams should dry up, if ye have God for your God, ye may say indeed, that ye want these created things, but ye have all the good that was in them, in another, to wit, in God. Ye want the vessels, but ye want not the water of comfort that was in them, for ye have it in God.

3. Having God for your God, ye have all in the promise, Rev. xxi. 7. He is unreasonably dissatisfied that has a good stock in bills and bonds from a sure hand, though he has little in his pocket, especially when all that is needful will be



upon them answered on demand. He that has the lively faith of his inheriting all things at length, will find it none of the most difficult tasks to be served with very little for the present.

4. *Lastly*, Having God for your God, the nature of your afflictions is altered. Your crosses are changed from curses into blessings; and however heavy they be, they run in the channel of the covenant to the common end of all covenant-blessings, your good, Rom. viii. 28.

This way of believing in order to contentment is,

1. A sure way, which will infallibly produce it, as surely as the laying of a hungry babe to a full breast will stay it. How many ways do men try for this which all misgive? but this cannot misgive, seeing God in Christ is a full contenting object. And if our faith were perfect, our contentment would be so too. When faith is perfected in sight in heaven, the saints will be warm without clothes, full without meat, and rich without money, for God will be all to them.

2. A short way, by which we may come quickly at it. What a far way about do men go for contentment, while they compass the creation for it, and when all is done miss it? But here we may say, 'Be not afraid, only believe,' Mark v. 36.

3. The only way; there is no other way to come at it. Fulness in the world will not do it; for as the estate enlarges, the desire enlarges too, and knows no bounds till it comes to that which is infinite; and thither it cannot come till it comes to God. A kingdom could not content Ahab, discontent crept in under a crown on his head, 1 Kings xxi. 4. If ye do not take up your soul's rest in God as your God in Christ, no considerations will prevail to content you. But if ye do, there are several considerations that may be of good use to you. As,

1. Consider, that the heaviest thing in thy lot comes out of a friend's hand. It is good news to Zion in the worst of times, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that sayeth unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!' Isa. lii. 7. Whoever be the instruments of our affliction, and whose hand soever be heavy on us, we meet with nothing but what comes through our Lord's fingers, John v. 22. 'The Father hath

committed all judgment unto the Son. And will we not venture our outward condition in his hand, on which we venture ourselves for eternity? A tongue, far less a hand, cannot move against us but by him, 2 Sam. xvi. 10.

2. Consider how unmeet you are to carve for yourselves; ‘and should it be according to thy mind?’ Job xxxiv. 33. How weak are ye to discern your true interest? Could ye venture to plot yourselves through the rocks and shelves in the world? No, ye dare not, if ye know yourselves. Why will ye not then resign yourselves to wise Providence? But, say, ye, it is only in some things we would have it so or so. Ay, but Christ will be steersman for thee through the whole, or not at all. He will not share the government with thee; and there is no reason he should, for thou art weak, and seest not far off. There is many a pleasant green path in the world that leads into the lion’s den, and many a rugged way that leads into a paradise: thou seest the hithermost end of the way, but not the far end; he sees it.

3. Have ye not already lived to see your hopes and fears both baffled by the conduct of wise Providence? As for the hopes ye have conceived of the choice of your own wilful will, have ye not been sometimes made to let the knife drop with shame, after ye have cut your fingers in carving for yourself; like Lot, not daring to stay in all the plain, though some time before he built his own nest in the heart of it? And for your fears of the conduct of Providence, have ye not seen how God has drawn you to your good against your will, and that it was good ye were crossed in such a matter, and that such a project of yours was baffled? Seeing, then, we are such bunglers at the carving of our lot, it is reasonable we quit the knife, and give it over, as Jacob did in Joseph’s case.

4. Consider, that there is much about the ordering of thy lot, infinitely more than thou art master of thyself. Believe it,

(1.) That the seven eyes of Infinite wisdom are about it, Zech iii. 9; Now, in the multitude of counsellors there is safety. There is no chance-work in the world, no random work in thy condition; it is not a work huddled up in a haste. The scheme of it was drawn from eternity, and lay before the Lord, without any need of alteration. Every

thing in thy condition, however late brought forth, was from eternity in the womb of the wise decree, Zech. vi. 1.

(2.) That there is a soft hand of grace and goodness about it, Rom. viii. 28; A gracious Providence brings it forth out of the womb of the decree: why should we not then embrace it, and welcome it into the world? There is a stream of grace that goes through all the dispensations of providence to the Lord's people. Now, when Infinite Wisdom, tempered with grace and good-will, orders our lot, is it not reasonable, that we be fully content with it? Hence I infer,

1. Thy condition, whatever it is, is for God's honour; for it is ordered by him who does all for that end, and cannot fail of his design. Though thou dost not see how it is so, thou mayest believe that is so, upon this ground. Providence runs much under ground, so as weak man cannot see how the means answer the end: but God sees it, and that is enough. This is a contenting consideration to a gracious soul, that will be pleased with that which may glorify God, Phil. i. 20.

2. Thy condition is good for thee, Rom. viii. 28; That may be good that is not pleasant; it may bring profit that brings no pleasure. God loves to work by contraries, to bring health to the soul out of sickness of the body, to enrich his people by poverty, to do them good by crossing of them, and blow them to their harbour by teeth-winds.

3. Nay, it is best for thee. If thou be a child of God, thy present lot in the world is the best thou couldst have for the present. Infinite Wisdom sees it is so; and grace and good-will makes it so. All God's works are perfect in their kind, Deut. xxxii. 4; Will vain man come after God, and tell him how to mend his work? If it were not fittest for his own holy ends, it were not perfect. Nay, if thou be not in Christ, those things in thy lot which thou art discontented with, thy crosses and afflictions, are best for thee; for if any thing in thy lot bring thee to God, it will be this. Which brings me to a fifth thing.

5. Consider, that those things in thy lot which thou art so ready to be discontented with, are truly necessary for thee, Lam. iii. 33; If thou couldst want them, thou wouldst not get them; for God takes no pleasure merely in making his creatures miserable. If thy lot be afflicted, know that



strong diseases must have strong remedies: blame not the physician for that, but the disease. The wilful child would live without the rod, but the parent sees it necessary to chastise him. If God withdraw any thing from thee, it is but to starve a lust that would feed on it; if he lay on thee what thou wouldst not, it is but to bear down a lust, that otherwise would carry thee headlong. Give Providence a fair hearing, it will answer for itself. Why should people then cast out with their mercies, and be angry with their blessings?

6. Consider, that great things in one's lot have a great burden with them. A man will get a softer bed in a palace than in a cottage, but the mean man will readily sleep sounder in his cottage than the king in his palace. People look to the great things which others have beyond them, but they do not consider the burden going along with them. They who want the one want the other too, and therefore have reason to be content.

(1.) Where there is a great trust, there is a great reckoning, Luke xii. 48; Thou seest others have much that thou wantest, grudge it not; they have the more to reckon for. God keeps an account of all his mercies bestowed on all men, and they that have most now have most to account for when the Lord shall seek an account of his servants. Look well to thyself, and be content. I fear it be found, that for as little as thou hast, thou hast more than thou canst guide well.

(2.) Great things in the world are great snares, and bring great dangers along with them, Mark x. 23; They that walk low make not such a figure as those that walk on high; but the latter are most apt to fall. How fond are we of the world even when it frowns on us? what would become of us if it did nothing but smile? It is hard to carry a full cup even. Affliction is often seasonable ballast to a light heart, that prosperity would give too much sail to, till it should be sunk.

7. Consider, if thou be a child of God, that which thou hast, thou hast on free cost, Rom. viii. 32; And therefore, though it be little, it is better to thee than the abundance of many others, which will bring a dear reckoning at length. The children of the family may fare more coarsely than strangers; but there is a great difference; the strangers have

a reckoning for it when they go away; but the children have nothing to pay.

(1.) Remember thou forfeited all in Adam; it is a mercy that thou hast any thing at all. I know nothing but sin and death that we can lay claim to as our own properly, Lam. iii. 39; He that deserves hell has no reason to complain, while he is out of it.

(2.) Any thing which thou hast a covenant-right to now, is through Christ; it is the purchase of his blood. So that makes it precious, as being the price of blood; and that should make us content with it, seeing we have it freely through him.

8. Consider the vanity of all things below the sun, Eccl. i. 2; A just estimation of worldly things would make us content with very little. But a blind judgment first sets an exorbitant price on earthly things, and raises the value of them; and then people think never to get enough of them. But low thoughts of them would clip the wings of our affections to them, and little of them would content us, Prov. xxiii. 5; Riches make themselves wings, and flee away. There is a wing of change, casualties, and losses: and though by thy wisdom thou could clip all these wings, yet there is a wing of death and mortality that will carry them away.

9. Consider the preciousness and excellency of heavenly things, Col. iii. 2; More heavenly-mindedness would make us less anxious about these things. If we be in hazard of losing these, it is madness to be taken up about trifles, and concerned with earthly losses. Will he whose life is in hazard go up and down making moan for a sore finger? And if they be secured, it is horrid ingratitude to be discontent with our lot here. Would a man that has a ship loaded with goods coming ashore, vex himself for losing a pin out of his sleeve, or a penny out of his pocket? Heaven will make up all our losses; and hell will make men forget their greatest crosses in the world.

*Lastly*, Consider much of death and eternity. For as little as any of us have, we have perhaps as much as will serve our turn here. Our time is uncertain. It is folly to vex ourselves, though we have not all conveniences that we would desire in a house that we have no tack of, but may remove from it to-morrow.

I have insisted largely on this point, because it is so very

necessary. Labour for a full contentment with your condition. This is the way to make a virtue of necessity; for our discontent and uneasiness will not add a cubit to the stature of our lot. And that which God will make crooked in it, we will not get made straight, however uneasy we be about it.

II. We are to consider the duty of this command, as it respects our neighbour. And that is a right and charitable or loving frame of spirit towards himself and all that is his. We may take up this in five things, which are here required.

1. Love to our neighbour's person, as to ourselves, Rom. xiii. 9. For seeing this command forbids us to wrong him so much as in thought, it plainly binds love to him upon us; not in word only, nor in deed only, by doing him good, but in heart, that our bowels move towards him, and love him for the sake of God. For whatever be unholy in him, yet he is one of God's creatures, of the same nature with ourselves, and capable of enjoying the same God with us.

2. An upright respect to what is his, for his sake. As we are to love himself for God's sake, so what is his for his sake, Deut. xxii. 1. A careless disposition and unconcernedness about what is our neighbour's, can never be a right frame to what is his. So it is an argument of the world's corruption, that all men seek their own things, and are so little concerned for the things of others. That is not charitable walking, Phil. ii. 4.

3. An hearty desire of his welfare and prosperity in all things, as of our own, his honour, life, chastity, wealth, good name, and whatever is his. This we owe to our very enemies, so far as it may be consistent with the honour of God, and their own spiritual good, which is the main thing we are to desire for all. I add this, because sometimes the loss of these may be more to the honour of God, and our neighbour's advantage, than the having of them, to wit, when they are abused to sin, Rom. xii. 20. Matth. v. 44.

4. A real complacency in his welfare, and the welfare of what is his, Rom. xii. 15. If our hearts rejoice not in our neighbour's welfare, we covet what he has, and secretly in our hearts devour it. But as we are to be well content with our own condition, so we are to be well content with our neighbour's welfare.

5. *Lastly*, A cordial sympathy with him in any evil that



befals him, Rom. xii. 20. For we are members one of another ; and as every member shares in the grief of any one, so should we in one another's afflictions. A hard heart unconcerned with the afflictions of others, especially where people talk to the grief of those whom God has wounded, is a sign of a wretched temper and uncharitable frame of spirit, Psal. lxi. 26. and xxxv. 13, 14, 15.

III. We must consider this command as it respects the root of sin. And so it requires original righteousness, a holy frame of the soul, whereby it is bent to all good, and averse to all evil ; that holy frame of spirit that was in the first Adam when he was created, and all along in the second Adam. And thus this command carries the matter of holiness to the utmost point.

That this is here required, will appear, if ye consider that this command forbids the very first risings of original corruption, whose very nature it is to be still coveting ; and therefore original corruption itself is forbidden, and consequently original righteousness required.

Not only good actions are required by the holy law, but a holy temper of the spirit, consisting in the light of the mind taking up duty, a bent of the will inclining ever to good, and averse to every evil, and the orderliness of the affections, keeping precisely within the holy boundaries set to them by the law, not to look over the hedge in the least point.

This is certainly required somewhere in the law ; for men are condemned for the want of it ; and in none of the commands is it required, if it be not here. And thus ye may see the utter impossibility of keeping perfectly these commands ; for whatever men pretend as to the rest, who of Adam's children do not stick here as soon as they are born ?

This command reaches us as soon as we are born ; nay, as soon as we are living souls in the womb, requiring of us what we have not to produce, and that is an holy nature. But, alas ! we are evil before we can do evil ; and we want that holy nature naturally, and therefore have at length such unholy lives.

If it be inquired, How this command in this point is answered sincerely ? *Ans.* It is by our being renewed in the spirit of our minds, our partaking of the new nature in regeneration, where old things being done away, and all things becoming new, we are made new creatures. This is that

new nature which is the image of God repaired, with a perfection of parts, to be crowned in heaven with a perfection of degrees.

And it is worthy of our observation, that Jesus Christ being to fulfil all righteousness, was born holy, and so fulfilled, this command for us. In him the law has its due, he being a man, who from his birth had a holy pure nature, a holy frame of spirit, without the least irregularity or disorder.

To conclude, ye may see the command is pure, just, and holy, however impure we be ; and requires of us the utmost purity of heart, life and nature.

I now proceed to consider the sins forbidden:

*Quest.* ‘ What is forbidden in the tenth comandment ?’

*Ans.* ‘ The tenth commandment forbiddeth all discontentment with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of our neighbour, and all inordinate motions and affections to any thing that is his.’

This command is a curb and bridle to the distempered heart of man, which of all parts of the man is the hardest to be commanded and kept within bounds. Men may be of a courteous obliging behaviour, keep in their hands from killing, or what tendeth thereunto, their bodies from uncleanness, their hands from stealing, and their tongues from lying ; while, in the mean time, the heart in all these respects may be going within the breast like a troubled sea, unto which this command by divine authority saith, Peace, and be still,

The heart distempered by original sins runs out in the irascible faculty in tormenting passions, bearing an aversion of the heart to what the Lord in his wisdom lays before men. This great stream of the corruption of our nature divides itself into two branches ; one running against our own condition, namely, a torrent of discontent ; the other against our neighbour, namely, envying and grudging at his good. In the concupiscible faculty, in lusting affections and inordinate motions towards something which God has put out of our way, at least with-held from our closest embraces. This also divides itself into two branches ; one running towards what is our own, namely, a sinful eagerness, lust, or inordinate motion of the heart to what we possess ; the other running towards what is our neighbour’s, an inordinate affection to what is his. Thus the corrupt heart runs in a direct op-

position to the will of God, refusing what he would have us to accept, and embracing closely what he would have us to stand at a distance from. The corrupt fountain with its several streams is all here forbidden. We shall speak to them all as laid before us, tracing the streams to the fountain-head.

FIRST, the streams in which the distemper of the heart runs are here forbidden expressly, because these are most exposed to our view. Let us view,

FIRST, The tormenting passions, in which the corruption of nature vents itself; for sin is in its own nature misery. We need but go in the paths of sin to make us miserable, and in the high road of duty to make us happy. We shall consider the tormenting passion,

*First*, Of discontent with our own estate or condition. This is plainly here forbidden; for discontentment is presupposed to coveting; and there could be no coveting of what we want without discontentment with what we have. The lusting gapings of the heart say, there is an uneasiness within. It is only the plague of discontentment that makes the heart cry, Give, give.

I. I will shew the evil of discontentment, and paint out this sin in its black colours. It is the hue of hell all over.

1. Discontent is, in the nature of it, a compound of the blackest ingredients, the scum of the corrupt heart boiling up, and mixed to make up this hellish composition.

1st, Unsubjection to and rebellion against the will of God, Hos. iv. 16. 'Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer;' backsliding or refractory, that will not admit the yoke farther than it is forced on. The discontented heart cannot submit, but sets its foot aspar against the divine dispensation. Though God guides and governs the world, they are the malcontents, that are not pleased with the government, but mutiny against it. What pleases God, pleases not them; what is right in God's eyes, is evil in theirs. And nothing will please them, but to have the reins of government out of God's hands into their own; though, if their passion did not blind their judgment, they might see how they would quickly fire the little world of their own and others condition, if they had the reins in their own hand.

2dly, Sorrow of heart under the divine dispensation towards them. It is not according to their mind, and so their



heart sinks in sorrow, 1 Kings xxi. 4; God crosses their will, and they pierce their own hearts with many sorrows; as if a man, because he cannot stop the course of the sun in the firmament, would wrap up himself in darkness.

And this is a killing sorrow, a sword thrust into a man's heart by his own hands, 2 Cor. vii. 10; It melts a man's heart within him; like a vulture, preys upon his natural spirits, tending to shorten his days. It makes him dumpish and heavy like Ahab, and is a heavy load above the burden of affliction. That is the black smoke of discontentment, which yet often breaks out into a fiery flame, as in the same case of Ahab, where Naboth fell a sacrifice to it.

*3dly*, Anger and wrath against their lot, Jude 16; *Complainers*. The word signifies such as are angry at their lot, and in the distributions Providence makes of the world, still complain that the least or worst part of it falls to their share. Thus the discontented do in their hearts bark at the mountains of brass, Zech. vi. 1; as dogs do at the moon, and with the same success. They are angry with God's dispensation, and their hearts rise against it, and snarl at it.

And this is a fretting anger, whereby men disquiet and vex themselves in vain, like men dashing their heads against the wall; the wall stands unmoved, but their heads are wounded. Like a wild bull in a net, the more he stirs, the faster is he held; so that still they return with the loss. Thus discontent is in the heart like a serpent gnawing the bowels, and makes a man as a moth to himself, consuming him, or a lion tearing himself, Job xviii. 4.

*Lastly*, There is a spice of heart-blasphemy in it; for it strikes very directly against God the Governor of the world, and accuses his administration; and for an evidence of this, it sometimes breaks out in words, Mal. iii. 13, 14, 15; 'Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord: yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy: yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.' Discontent accuses him,

(1.) Of folly, as if he were not wise enough to govern the world. The peevish discontented person, in his false light,

sees many flaws in the conduct of Providence, and pretends to tell God how he may correct his work, and how it would be better. If the work of Providence be wisely done, why are we discontent with it? or would we be discontent with it, if we did not think we saw how it should be otherwise, and how it might be mended?

(2.) Of injustice, as if he did us wrong. The Judge of all the earth cannot but do right. He cannot be bribed nor biassed; yet the discontented heart rises against him, and blasphemes him as an acceptor of persons. It looks on his distributive justice (if we may so call it, for indeed all is his own, not ours) with an evil eye, and accuses him of partiality in not giving them as good as others, complaining of their share. On his corrective justice, as if they did not deserve what he lays on them. For if we do deserve the evil in our lot, there is no wrong done us; and why do we then complain? And to fill up the measure, it accuseth him,

(3.) Of cruelty. Job, in a fit of discontent, speaks it out, chap. xxx. 21; 'Thou art become cruel to me.' Thus goodness itself is blasphemed by the discontented, who behave as if they were under the hands of a merciless tyrant, who would sport himself with one's misery. Discontent fills the heart with black and hard thoughts of God, and represents him as a rigid master and cruel lord; otherwise people would lay their hand on their mouth, and be content.

Some will say, that their discontent is with themselves, not with God, having brought their cross on with their own hands. *Ans.* If it be the effect of your sin, ye may mourn for your sin, but ye should the rather be content with your lot. And as for mismanagements, there is a providence that reaches them, and so God is our party still: but nothing is more ordinary than that, Prov. xix. 3; 'The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord.'

Others say, that it is with the instruments of their trouble they are discontented. *Ans.* But consider that they are but instruments in God's hand, in the hand of his providence, and therefore ye should not be discontent. Say as David did to the sons of Zeruiah, 'What have I to do with you? so let him curse because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?' 2 Sam. xvi. 10; No creature can be more to us than God

makes it to be: if then God shall squeeze any creature dry of comfort to us, and we thereupon prove discontented, whatever we pretend, our hearts fret against the Lord, *Exod. xvi. 2*; compare *ver. 7*.

Thus ye see the picture of discontentment; and does it not look very black? There are ounces and pounds of rebellion against the will of God, killing sorrow and fretting anger, and hideous heart-blasphemy in it, while there is not one grain of religion or reason that goes into this hellish composition. If one should take it for a description of hell, he would not be far out; for the truth is, discontent is a hell in the bosom, and a lively emblem of the pit of darkness.

2. If ye view discontentment in the rise of it, ye will see further into the evil of it. It takes its rise from,

1st, A blinded judgment which puts darkness for light, and light for darkness, and cannot see into the wisdom of the conduct of Providence, that does all things well. When our blind minds begin to refine on the management of holy Providence, they are apt to produce discontent, which in respect of Providence is always unreasonable. See how good Jacob bewrays his folly and ignorance of the methods of providence, *Gen. xlii. 36*; 'Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.' Compare with this the promise, *Rom. viii. 28*; 'All things shall work together for good to them that love the Lord, to those who are the called according to his purpose;' and also compare the event; and ye will see that all these things were for the benefit of the good Patriarch, and that of his numerous family.

Yea, oft-times so readily does it rise out of darkness, that it springs up from mere suspicion, misapprehension, and mistake, so that a little cloud of that nature over the mind will in the end cover the mind with the blackness of discontent; as in the case of Ahab, *1 Kings xxi. 4*; compare *ver. 6*; And indeed there is never a ground of discontent, but the blind mind does magnify it, and lays to it such heaps of rubbish, as the heart is not able to stand under it, as in the case of Rachael, *Gen. xxx. 1*; When Rachael saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachael envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.' Thus are our own dark minds the anvil on which our miseries are beat out into



greater breadth and length than they are of, as they come out of the hand of God, to the end they may cover our hearts with discontent. Happy is the man that can take up his cross as God lays it down, without adding more to it.

2dly, A proud heart. Haman's pride discontented him for want of bows and cringes from Mordecai, which would never have troubled a humble man. A proud heart is a *wide* heart, Prov. xxviii. 25. *Heb.* It is not little that will fill it; it is long ere it will say, it is enough: and so it natively produces discontent. The devil is the proudest creature, and withal the most discontented; for pride and discontent lodge always under one roof. And could we get blood let of the heart-vein of pride, we would see the swelling ulcer of discontent fall apace.

3. An unmortified affection to the creature, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10; Jonah had a gourd, and he was exceeding glad of it, Jonah iv. 6; it is taken away, and then he was exceeding discontented, ver. 9; The heart takes such a hold of such and such a created comfort, that it becomes like a live limb of a man's body; so when it is rent away, what wonder one cry out, as if men were cutting a limb of him? No body cries out for the losing of a tree leg, because it has no communication with the members of the man's body, it is a dead thing. So, were our affection to the creature deadened to it, as it should be, discontent could have no access.

4. A spirit of unbelief. Want of faith marred the acceptance of Cain's offering, Heb. xi. 4; and opened the sluice of discontent on him too, Gen. iv. 5; 'Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.' Discontent feeds on wants, faith brings in the supply of wants, and can feed on it, while it is yet in the promise. Where unbelief is, then no wonder discontent prevail. A lively faith would kill discontent; whereas unbelief nourishes and cherishes it; for it puts an effectual bar in the way of the rest of the heart, which it can never attain but in God.

3. View it in the effect, and it will appear very black. The tree is known by its fruits.

1st, It mars communion with and access to God. Muddy and troubled water receives not the image of the sun, as a clear and standing water will do. So a discontented heart is unfit for communion with a holy God, 1 Tim. ii. 8; 'Can two walk together except they be agreed?' If one

would have communion with God, his heart must not be boiling with anger against his brother, Matth. v 23, 24. How then can he have it, when he is angry with his God, as in discontent?

*2dly*, It quite unfits a man for holy duties, so that he cannot perform them rightly or acceptably, for speaking to God in prayer, or his speaking to them by his word. 1. It deadens one's heart within him, as in Nabal's case, 1 Sam. xxv. 37. whose 'heart died within him, and he became as a stone.' 2. It takes away the relish of spiritual things, vitiates the taste, and turns them sapless to people, as it did to the Israelites in Egypt, Exod. vi. 7,—9. 3. It carries the heart off the duty, to pore on the ground of discontent, and makes them drive heavily in God's worship, and serve him drooping and heartless, as it did the Jews in Malachi's time, Mal. ii. 13, 14. Their unkindness to their wives made them discontented and fretful, so that when they came to the temple, they were quite out of humour:

*3dly*, Nay, it unfits people for the work of their ordinary calling. It is not only an enemy to grace, but to gifts too, and common prudence. The black fumes ascending from the discontented heart overcloud the judgment in ordinary matters, that the one hand knows not what the other is doing, as in Nabal's case, who should have gone and made his peace with David. So that it is a plague to people, not only as Christians, but as men.

*4thly*, It mars the comfort of society, and makes people uneasy to those that are about them. When Elkanah went up to Shiloh with his family to rejoice before the Lord, fretting Hannah is out of tune, and mars the harmony, 1 Sam. i. 7, 8. Peninnah provokes Hannah, Hannah is angry with her, and Elkanah with both. So it is the pest of society, and makes an evil world ten times worse. It makes people a burden to others, because it gives them a cloudy day while it lasts.

*5thly*, It is a torment to one's self, and makes a man his own tormentor, 1 Kings xxi. 4. It wraps him up in darkness, feeds him with bitterness, and gives him gall and wormwood to drink, Prov. xv. 16. for his ordinary. It robs him of the best worldly thing he can possess, i. e. his peace and tranquillity of mind; and makes his mind within him as the troubled sea that cannot rest. So the discontented person is

on a continual rack, and he himself is executioner. All sins are displeasing to God, yet in many there is some pleasure to men, both the actors and others; but corrupt nature cannot strain any pleasure out of this in one's self, nor in others either, unless, like the devil, they have a pleasure in seeing others miserable.

*6thly*, It is not only tormenting to one's mind, but is ruinous to the body, Prov. xvii. 22. 'A broken spirit drieth the bones.' It is a degree of self-murder. It wastes the natural spirits, and has a native tendency to cut short one's days. The soul and body are so knit, that they mutually affect one another; and the mind disordered by fretting passions, will fret the body, and consume it like a moth.

*7thly*, It sucks the sap out of all one's enjoyments. As a few drops of gall will imbitter a cup of wine, and a few drops of ink will blacken a cup of the clearest liquor; so discontent upon one ground will imbitter and blacken all other enjoyments. See it in Haman, Esth. v. 11,—13. 'And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. Haman said, moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared, but myself; and to-morrow am I invited unto her also with the king. Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate,' See it also in Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 4. 'And Ahab came into his house, heavy and displeased, because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers: and he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.' As contentment turns all metals into gold, so discontentment turns them into iron. What taste is there in the white of an egg without salt? There is as much as in any enjoyment under the sun without contentment. If we have not that for seasoning to our comforts, they are tasteless and sapless as ashes. And therefore let a man have what he will he enjoys no more than what he has contentment in.

*8thly*, Hence it always makes one unthankful. Let Providence set the discontented man in a paradise, the fruit of that one tree which is forbidden him, and which he is so un-



easy about, will so imbitter him, that he will not give God thanks for all the variety of other delights which the garden is furnished with. For all these avail him nothing while that is kept out of his reach. It will make him pore so on his cross, that he will not look over his shoulder to all his comforts. Ingratitude is a sin of a black die: how much more must that be so which is the cause of it?

*Lastly*, It is a fruitful womb of other sins, it brings forth a great brood of other lusts. When once it entered into Adam's heart, it made him at one stroke break through all the ten commandments. It were an endless labour to recount the viporous brood that comes forth of this cockatrice-egg, that fry of enormous lusts that are bred by it. But for a swatch of this, I will instance in three of the grossest sins that man can readily fall into, which are the natural product of discontentment.

(1.) Murder, the grossest sin of the second table, a sin which a peculiar vengeance pursues, and which a natural conscience so startles at, that it is a continual lash to the murderer. This is the product of discontent; for when once the heart smoking with discontent, breaks out into a flame, it breathes out blood and slaughter. So Ahab's discontent was the cause of the murder of Naboth, with all the mocking of God, the perjury and robbery that attended it, 1 Kings xxi. Nay, not content with the murder of a single person, it gaped in Haman to devour a righteous nation for one man's cause, Esth. iii. 6. Nay, the worst sort of murder proceeds from it; the murder of nearest relations, as in the case of Cain's murdering Abel, Gen. iv. 5, 8. And, which is worst of all, self-murder is what always proceeds from it, as in the case of Ahithophel, 2 Sam. xvii. 23. People grow discontented with their lot, their proud hearts are not able to bear it; so they turn desperate, seeing they cannot help it, and make away with themselves.

(2. Dealing with the devil. The discontented being angry with God, they are in a fair way to be a prey to Satan. Thus Saul, in a fit of discontent, went to the witch at Endor, 1 Sam. xxviii. The discontented heart is a drumly heart, and it is in such waters that Satan loves to fish. And here is his hook wherewith he catches them; he proffers to do that for them, or give that to them, which God will not. And they being intent upon it, so that they cannot be easy

without it, are easily ensnared. Whereof the world has afforded many miserable instances.

(3.) Blasphemy against God, the grossest sin of the first table, for of that kind is the unpardonable sin. Discontent is in its own nature a practical blasphemy, and therefore when it comes to a height, it breaks out in open blasphemy, as in that abominable mouth, 2 Kings vi. ult. ‘This evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?’ For being angry with God, people begin to quarrel with him, and murmur against him; and if they do not hold in time, they are in a fair way to blaspheme. Therefore it is marked concerning Job, how by his sitting down contented under all his losses the devil missed the mark he aimed at in them, Job i. ult. compare ver. 11. It is marked concerning Aaron, that he held his peace, Lev. x. 3. for it is hard to speak, and speak right, under great pressures. These effects may convince us of the exceeding evil of this root of bitterness.

*Lastly*, View it in the qualities that agree to it, which are not in many other sins. I will name the following.

1st, It is the noted rebel in the kingdom of providence. God who has created the world, vindicates the government of it to himself alone. But the discontented go about to wrest the reins of government out of his hand. It wages war with the Governor of the world, and strives with him, as if the clay should strive with the potter, and say, ‘Why hast thou made me thus?’

2. It is a peculiar despiser of the kingdom of grace. There is a particular malignity in it against the grace of the gospel. For it throws contempt on God, heaven, and all the purchase of Christ, which is offered in the gospel to fill up the room of what the discontented wants, Exod. vi. 7, 9. It is true, other lusts do so too, as covetousness, sensuality, and profaneness. But here lies the difference; these lusts have a bait of profit or pleasure with them, and have something to put in the room of spiritual things; discontent has no bait with it, nor any thing to put in the room of them. If one should reject your converse, who has another less worthy to converse with, it is a slight: but if one that has none, if they take not you, do reject you, that is a greater contempt by far. So the discontented will rather pine away without any comfort, than take it from the gospel. Again, in these lusts

there is a folly and simplicity ; but in discontent there is a kind of gravity and devilish seriousness. To be contemned by a simple one or a roving fool, is not easy ; but it is worse by far to be contemned in a way of gravity and deliberation. This is most cutting.

*Lastly*, It follows men to, and will continue with them, in the kingdom of darkness for ever. There are some lusts which men have no use for beyond the line of time ; the covetous will despise their gold, money and wealth in hell, the unclean person his filthy companions, &c. But when the discontented die without repentance, their works will follow them to the pit. In hell they will be discontented for ever without the least intermission ; they will never give one smile more, but an eternal cloud of darkness will be on their countenance, and they will fret, murmur, and rage against God and themselves and blaspheme for evermore.

Let us see the evil of this, then, and guard against it.

*Secondly*, I will offer some remedies against it, and advices in the case.

1. Practise the directions for contentment ; particularly take God for your God in Christ, and labour to believe he is so. Take him in the room of whatever ye want, or lies on you, which discontents you. Without this all else will be in vain. The greatest hole in your heart, the enjoyment of God is able to make up. And God often makes such in the hearts of men and women, that there may be room for himself, who otherwise is not missed, Zeph. iii. 17. ‘ The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty ; he will save, he will rejoice over with joy ; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.’

2. Labour to be humble. Humility lets us see our true worth that it is nothing, and so fences the heart against discontent, Gen. xxxii. 10. It makes one wonder he has any thing at all left him, and so lets him into the mystery of that text, 1 Thess. v. 18. ‘ In every thing give thanks ; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.’ He that is convinced that he deserves death, will not be discontent with banishment. And he that believes that he deserves to lose the presence of God for ever, will lay his hand on his mouth under temporal losses.

3. Believe that there is nothing in the world in which either your happiness or misery is bound up. I know there



are things of which we are wont to speak so; but the world's happiness or misery is but a shadow of these things. That is happiness where a man wants no more than he can desire, and that is only in the enjoyment of God. And that is misery where one has nothing desirable left him, and none see that till they be in hell.

4. Do not pore upon your crosses, for that does but breed and feed discontent, Psal. xxxix. 3. It is observable, that Jacob would not call his son Benoni, lest that should at every naming of the child ruffle his wound. But you may dwell upon your affliction as from the hand of God, to consider wherefore the Lord has contended, that so you may get the good of it. But turn your eyes on your mercies which you enjoy and be thankful.

5. Be much exercised in religious duties. Go often to your knees, and pour out your hearts before the Lord, and tell him all your wants. This gave Hannah a sweet ease, 1 Sam. i. 18. Go often to your Bibles, and hear the good news there from the far country, that is above the clouds, where there is neither cloud nor rain, Psal. lxxiii. 16, 17. & cxix. 92. There are springs of consolation there, which a person never tastes of, till he be brought into the condition for which they were placed there.

6. Be always exercised in some honest business. Idleness is dangerous many ways, particularly in the point of discontent. It is a nurse and fosterer of it. It is the standing pool that gathers mud; and in those that are idle Satan will be busy, and will not miss the opportunity.

7. Curb it as soon as it begins to set out its head, nip it in the bud, for it is a fire that gathers force by continuing and spreading. The water which at the head might be easily passed, comes afterwards to be so big as to be able to drown. Discontent is a striving with God, and so is like the letting out of waters, which however small at the beginning, grows to a monstrous bigness, if not timely remedied.

*Lastly*, Live by faith; that is the best preservative against discontent. Faith stays the soul in all events on the promises; gives a favourable view of all crosses and afflictions, as tending to the good of the party; lays hold upon things unseen as the great portion; and so lessens the care about things of the world; and, in a word, finds all it wants in God. Thus much of discontent.

II. The branch that runs against our neighbour's condition is envying and grudging. The object of this sin is the good of our neighbour; and the better the object is, the worse is the sin. It runs through the objects of all the other commands of the second table; for the heart is apt to envy our neighbour's honour, life, &c. It is near of kin to discontent which always accompanies it, as we may see in the case of Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 4. for it goes always on a comparison of our neighbour's condition with one's own, the grudge being that they have more or as much as we.

I shall shew the evil of it, and the remedies thereof.

*First*, I shall shew the evil of it briefly.

1. View it in the ingredients thereof, whereof it is made up.

*1st*, Sorrow and grief for the good of our neighbour, 1 Cor. xiii. 4. (So opposite is it to charity); for envy makes the heart like the moon that shines full and clear in the night, as long as itself is the topping light, but grows pale and wan as soon as the sun riseth, John iii. 26. The prosperity and welfare of others is a weight on the envious heart, a thorn in the evil eye, and a prick in that weak side, Gen. xxxi. 1.

*2dly*, Fretting anger at their good, Psal. xxxvii. 1. What makes others easy, makes the envious uneasy; and the more fresh and green others are by the providence of God, the more withered and fretted are they, Num. xi. 28, 29. So it was with Joseph's brethren. The sun shining on others burns them up; and the more it warms their neighbour, the more it scorches them, and makes the black fume of envy and grudge to ascend.

2. View it in the springs and rise thereof.

*1st*, Covetousness of what is their neighbour's. Had not Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard, he had not grudged him the possession of it. The envious would draw all to themselves; and what they are sorry others should keep, they themselves would fain possess. A heart knit to the world, and carnal self-interest, cannot miss to be envious.

*2dly*, Discontent. The envious are always discontented that they have not more than others, or that they want what others do enjoy. Discontent makes an empty room with them, and envy frets that it is not filled up with what belongs to their neighbour.

*3dly*, Pride and selfishness, Gal. v. ult. Pride so exalts one's self, and depresses others, that nothing is too much for the proud man, and nothing too little for his neighbour. Selfishness cares only for what is one's own, and has no regard to the interest of our neighbour; quite contrary to the spirit of the gospel, that teaches, that every man should not look on his own things, but also on the things of others, Phil. ii. 4. Hence the man cannot endure to see others like him, far less above him.

3. View it in the effects thereof. It has almost the same as those of discontent, which may be well applied thereto. I will only say, that envy is a sword, and wounds three at once.

1st, It strikes against God, being highly offensive and dishonourable to him. It quarrels his government of the world. and accuses him of folly, partiality, and injustice, Matth. xx. 15. It cannot rest in the disposals of holy providence, but is ever picking quarrels with its management. Some have too much, others too little, the world is ill dealt; though, had they the dealing of it, where there is one complaint now, there would be ten in that case, for they would heap it up to themselves, come of others what would.

*2dly*, It strikes against our neighbour. It is a bitter disposition of spirit, wishing his ill fare, and grudging his good; and not only bind up men's hands from doing him good, but natively tends to loose them to his hurt. It will be at him one way or other in word or deed, and there is no escaping the evil of it, Prov. xxvii. 4. 'Who is able to stand before envy?' Oft-times it drives on men to the greatest extravagancies, as it did Joseph's brethren to murder him; which being stopt, they sold him for a slave, Gen. xxxvii. 11, &c.

3. It strikes at one's self, Job v. 2. 'Envy slayeth the silly man.' Though it be so weak as to do no execution on others, yet be sure it never misses a man's self; and it wounds one's self the deeper, that it cannot do much hurt to the party envied. It frets the mind, and keeps it always uneasy as upon tenter-hooks; nay, it ruins the body, and silently murders it, Prov. xiv. 30. 'Envy is the rottenness of the bones,' making a man to pine away, because others thrive.

*Secondly*, I shall give the remedies of this sin.

1. Taking and cleaving to God himself as our portion,



Matth. vi. 21. God is a full portion, and in him there is enough for all; and if our souls rest in him, they will easily bear others having other things that we want. But the world can never satisfy; and therefore when people look for their portion in it, it is no wonder they be always complaining, and think others have more and better than they, because if they had it all alone, they would not have enough.

2. Loving God for his own sake, and our neighbour for his sake. Did we thus love, we would rejoice in God's honour, and our neighbour's welfare. This guarded Moses and John against envy, and made them joy in what others grieved at and grudged. An envious spirit is a narrow spirit, that is never concerned for the one nor the other, but for sweet self, to which all must be sacrificed by them.

3. Humility, which would make us low in our own eyes, and make others high. He that is in his own eyes nothing, will not grudge though his part be less than others; the chief of sinners will never think the highest seat among the favourites of providence belongs to him. And whoso have a due regard for others, will not grudge that it is well with them.

I come next to consider how the corruption of nature runs in concupiscence, lust, or inordinate affection. The two branches into which it divides itself are,

1. A lust after what is our own.

2. A lust after what is our neighbour's, or not ours.

*First*, A lust after what is our own. What God has given us, we may like and desire for the ends he has given it. But when that desire is inordinate, it is sinful, it is lust and inordinate affection, Col. iii. 5. Now, the desire of, or love to, or liking of what is ours, is inordinate in these several cases following, all which are here forbidden.

1. The heart's being so glued to them, that it cannot want them, cannot part with them, 1 Cor. vi. 12. There is but one thing needful, Luke x. ult. the enjoyment of God. So God has made it, and therefore he would have us sit loose to all other things. When instead of that the heart cleaves to other things, so that it cannot part with them, that is a lust to them, that must be killed by weaning therefrom, Luke xiv. 26. There the heart grips too hard, and must have it.

2. A too great eagerness in the using of them, when the

heart casts off the band of religion and reason, and runs loose after them. Thus a man may have a lust to his own meat or drink, 1 Sam. xiv. 32. For our affections even to lawful things need a curb, because they are ready to be violent; and the violent pulse of the affections to them is a symptom of a feverish soul distempered by original sin.

3. The desire of them for other ends than God has allowed and appointed; for then it is carried without the rule set by the Lord, and cannot miss to be inordinate. Thus oft-times God's good creatures are desired to be fuel to lusts, Jam. iv. 3, 4. To desire meat for our necessity, is not evil; but for our lusts, is not good. Whatever God has made ours, is not absolutely, but with a reserve, to wit, for such uses as he has allowed; if we go beyond that with them, it is a sinful lusting after the same, as if it were not ours at all. But, alas! in these things men are often like a tenant, who having taken a house to dwell in, would make bold to pull it down, and burn it for fuel.

4. The being led to the use of them, without reason, necessity, or expediency. Then we are under the power of them, and not they under our power, 1 Cor. vi. 12. It is lawful to eat, but to be a slave to unreasonable appetite is a sin, and so in other cases. For so the soul is degraded, and made to serve a lust, instead of commanding and regulating the desire, which ought always to be subject to right reason. And however common this is, and but little regarded, it is the native effect of original sin, which has disturbed the order and beautiful harmony of the faculties of the soul; the affections like an unruly horse, refusing to be held in by the curb of reason.

5. The using of them to the hurt either of soul or body; in that case the desire cannot but be inordinate. Our souls and bodies are the Lord's, and he says as of his own, *Do thyself no harm.* It must needs be a lust that carries a man over the belly of this command. Yet, alas! how many such motions and affections have people to what is even their own, that to satisfy them they sacrifice both their spiritual and temporal interests! Hence it is a good rule in the use of lawful things, That then people do exceed, when by the use of them they are unfitted, either for the service of God, or their own interest.

6. The using of them without any regard to the honour

of God, 1 Cor. x. 31. The old world were 'Inmgenles,' *eating like beasts*. The glory of God should regulate us in all things, determine us to the use of what is ours, and determine us against it; all being to be cut and carved as may best suit that end.

*Secondly*, A lust after what is our neighbours, or not ours. Every desire of what is our neighbour's is not sinful, otherwise there could be no trading, buying, selling, exchanging, bargaining, &c. amongst men. There are holy boundaries set to these desires by the law of God; and as long as they abide within these, they are lawful; but when they exceed, they are inordinate, lustings, and coveting, and here forbidden. Now they are inordinate,

1. When the very having of them is unlawful, the desire of them is a lust, and inordinate motion. *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife*; for as John said to Herod, 'It is not lawful for thee to have her,' viz. his brother's wife, Matth. xiv. 4. What is absolutely forbidden us, we may no way desire, otherwise we do but re-act Adam's sin, in lusting after the forbidden fruit. The heart joins with those things which God has put out of its embrace, and requires it to stand at a distance from.

2. Though the having of them may be lawful, as of our neighbour's house, servant, ox, &c. yet the desire of them may be a lust, and is so in several cases; as,

1st, When they are desired for unlawful ends, to feed some lust, as when a man desires his neighbour's drink, not for strength, but drunkenness, this is a sinful coveting, an inordinate motion to what is his, though he pay for it. O how much sin is contracted this way, that is never noticed: How many things are desired and purchased too from others, even in a lawful way, which are for no other end desired but to feed some lust? If our desires be not regulated by reason, necessity, or expediency, they are but sinful lustings. This sinful humour in the hearts of men and women, has produced many trades and inventions in the world, which had never been known if man's nature had not been corrupted. And these are maintained and encouraged, by people's care to gratify their lusts, their vanity, pride, sensuality, &c. Whereas, if they walked strictly by necessity and expediency, according to religion and reason, there would be no more use for them than there is of a third wheel to a cart. From



the beginning it was not so. Therefore surely the heart is distempered, and these the disorderly motions.

*2dly*, When the desire sets people on unlawful means to procure them, it is a lust. Though it be lawful to have one's neighbour's servant, his ox, &c. they may be thine lawfully; yet, if thy desire set thee on underhand dealing to rob him of his servant, to cheat or wheedle him out of his ox, &c. it is coveting of them with a witness. And thus lust of covetousness thus acting keeps the world in a continual ferment, so that no man is sure of another. For hardly is there a bargain made, but both buyer and seller labours to get something for this lust, as well as for his necessity and expediency. And what wonder is it, that one who has running sores in his hand, leaves some marks of them on every thing he touches? Such is our case by natural corruption.

*3dly*, When the desire, though it sets not an unlawful means, yet is too eager after what is another's. This sinful eagerness discovers itself several ways, all here forbidden; as

(1.) When people cannot wait with ease the time they are to get the thing; but the feverish desire makes them uneasy, as Rachael was with the desire of children.

(2.) When they are overjoyed with the enjoyment of it, as Jonah was with his gourd. And indeed it is hard to joy, and not overjoy, in any thing that is not God or grace.

(3.) When they are fretted and discontented at the missing of it, as Ahab was, who, for ought appears, had no mind to seek Naboth's vineyard but for money, till his wicked wife put it in his head; but he was fretted for the want of it.

(4.) When they cannot be satisfied without it, but must have it, though not truly necessary, cost what it will, as Esau was set for the red pottage that his brother had. This makes a price that they call the price of affection, which often is nothing else but the price of unreasonable fancy, which must be gratified at any rate.

*4thly*, When the desire singly goes out after something that Providence has put out of one's reach, though the man has no mind to seek it, nay, would not have it if it were offered him. This seems to have been David's sin, when he longed, and said, 'Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!' 2 Sam. xxiii. 15. Some think this was a gallant soldier's wish, as if he had said, O that we could drive the Philistines garrison out of Bethle-

hem! Some of the old Rabbi's think it was a pious wish, and that David longed for the Messiah that was to break out there. But it seems to be a sinful wish, as both the word, which is used, Prov. xxi. 26; 'He coveteth greedily all the day long,' and the pointing in the original, seem to carry it. The weather was hot, and he was thirsty, and a violent fancy took him to have a drink out of the well of Bethlehem, where he had often drank in his young days. But I cannot think that ever he meant, that any body should go fetch it at that time, ver. 17; but his men seeing the humour he was in, ventured. Thus lust breaks out, and guilt is contracted, many ways. The eyes see something that is not ours, and the heart says, O that it were mine! without any design about it. Something that God has locked up from us in providence, and the heart yearns after it, saying, O that I had it! Something we hear others have got, a good gift, bargain, or match, and the heart says, O that it had fallen to my share! and many such things, all without any design. They are inordinate desires and lustings, for they still imply a coveting, and a dissatisfaction in some sort with our lot, which the holy law can never allow.

In all these cases the desire of what is not ours is a lust, a sinful, inordinate motion, to what is our neighbour's.

Further, to trace this lust and lusting of the heart forbidden in this command, though it is as impossible for me to follow it in its several turnings and windings, as to tell the moles that appear where the beams of the sun are shining in a room. Besides the actual fulfilling of lusts, (Eph. ii. 3.) in deeds which they drive to, which belongs to other commands, there are other things forbidden here, viz.

1. Lust in the fruit fully ripe, though not fallen off in the act; that is, when the lust is not only consented to, and resolved upon, but all the measures are laid for bringing it forth into action. As Haman's lust of revenge, when he had got the king's sealed letters for the destruction of the Jews; Joseph's missress' lust, when she caught him, and said, *Lie with me*. This sometimes Providence blasts when come to all this ripeness, as in those cases, against the person's will. That is before God much alike as the sinful action itself. Sometimes conscience blasts it, so that the person suddenly retires as from the brink of a precipice, which he was going to throw himself over. That is before God as wanting but

a very little of the sin completed. And, according to the nature of the thing, it will be very bitter in penitent reflections on it.

2. Lust in the fruit unripe; that is, when it is consented to for action, but the means of fulfilling it are not deliberated upon. Thus people, in the hurry of a temptation, are carried so far, that their hearts say within them, they will do it. Then lust hath conceived, Jam. i. 15; when it is brought this length, a little more will bring it to the birth. But though it never come farther, it leaves as much guilt on the soul, as will make a sick conscience.

3. Lust in the blossom; that is, when though it is not consented to for action, yet it is consented to in itself, and spreads in morose delectation, as they call it, or abiding delight in the lust. That seems to be the lust especially meant, Matth. v. 28; 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart.' O what guilt is contracted this way even by the wandering of the desire, (Eccl. vi. 9;) which the person has no mind to gratify by action! Thus the covetous man lusteth, and heaps up riches and wealth to himself in imagination; the proud man lusts, and heaps up honour, &c. the revengeful, &c. And all that the lust feeds on here is but mere fancy, airy nothings, which perhaps never had, nor does the man really expect will ever have, a being. This is lust dreaming, for which a conscience will get a fearful awakening; though stupid souls please themselves in it, that it does ill to no body, nor minds ill to them.

4. Lust in the bud; that is, the first risings of lust, even before the consent of the will to them; the first openings of particular lusts, sometimes not regarded nor noticed, and so neither approved nor disapproved; and sometimes checked in their very rising, Rom. vii. 15; But however it be, they are sins here forbidden, though the Papists will not allow them to be so, more than Paul in his unconverted state: 'I had known lust, except that the law had said, Thou shalt not covet,' Rom. vii. 7; Who can number those that are still setting up their heads in the corrupt heart, as naturally rising from it as stench from a dunghill, or weeds and thistles from the cursed ground? These are lustings in embryo, whereof some are formed, others not. They are happiest in this world that crush them in the bud; but happiest of



all when they do not so much as bud; but it is so in heaven only.

*Lastly*, Lust in the seed. The seed itself is the corrupt nature, original sin, of which afterwards. But here I understand particular lusts, as pride, covetousness, &c. which are the spawn of the corruption of nature, the members of the old man, which the apostle calls us to mortify, Col. iii. 5. These are they from which these cursed buds immediately sprout forth. Original sin has the lusts thereof, and these are they, Rom. vi. 12. We cannot enumerate them, more than we can count the dust. But in the general.

1st, There are fleshly lusts, 1 Pet. ii. 11; lust conversant about the body, and gratifying to the flesh, such as covetousness, uncleanness, sensuality, &c. In these the body drags the soul after it, and the soul goes out in these to gratify the body.

2dly, There are spiritual lusts, 2 Cor. vii. 1. Eph. ii. 3. There is a filthiness of the spirit as well as of the flesh, which lies more inwardly, in the mind and will, having nothing ado with the sensitive appetite, as pride, selfishness, &c. These are the two bands of lusts which the old man sends forth to maintain and advance the government of hell in the soul; but both sorts are under a sentence of condemnation from the law of God; declared rebels to heaven, and enter-communed, not to be conversed with, harboured, or entertained, but resisted, fought against, and brought to the cross. They are in good and bad; but,

(1.) In natural men they are reigning lusts, Rom. vi. 12. They have the throne in the heart, and amongst them command all. But there is readily one among them, like Beelzebub, that is the prince of these devils, called the predominant sin, to which other lusts will bow, though they will not bow to God. As where pride is the predominant, it will make covetousness bow; and where covetousness predominates, it will make pride bow. These do not always continue their rule; but the old man can pull down one, and set up another, as lust in youth may be succeeded by covetousness in old age.

(2.) In the regenerate they are but indwelling lusts, Rom. vi. 12. and vii. 24. They are cast down from the throne in conversion, pursued and hunted in progressive sanctification, and weakened, and utterly extirpated out of the kingdom at death. But their very being there is against the law, tho' they be not on the throne.

Now, these lusts are ‘divers lusts,’ Tit. iii. 3. It is not one or two that are in the heart, but many. Their name may be *legion*, for they are *many*. The flesh, or corrupt nature is a monster with many heads; but there is one law for them all, they must die. Though they be all the birth of one belly, they are very diverse; for our natural corruption turns itself into a thousand shapes. But,

The qualities common to them all, whereby ye may see more into their nature, are these. They are.

1. Ungodly lusts, Jude 18. There is nothing of God in them, no not so much as in the devil, who is God’s creature; but they are none of God’s creatures, he disowns them, 1 John ii. 16. They are the creatures of a corrupt heart, generated of it, as vermin of a rotten body, by influence from hell.

2. Hellish lusts, devilish lusts, John viii. 44. They were the devil’s before they were our’s, and so it is a sorry copy we have to write after. They are eminently in him; and those in whom they are grown to the greatest perfection, are but bunglers at the trade, to the perfection of which he has arrived. They came from him, they are pleasing to him wherever they are, and they like to be with him for evermore.

3. They are warring and fighting lusts, Jam. iv. 1.

(1.) They war against the Spirit wherever it is, Gal. v. 17. They are enemies to grace and the Spirit of grace; and the more they prevail, the kingdom of grace is the lower in the heart. They war against the entrance of grace, and often prevail to keep it out; like so many burrows from hell, choaking the word that would bring it in, Mark iv. 19. They war against the actings and exercise of it, till it is often laid by as in a swoon. And they war against the very being of it, which they would destroy if God had not said against it.

(2.) They war against the soul 1 Pet. ii 11. and will ruin it, if they be not ruined. They are no other to the soul than vermin and worms to a dead corpse, that feed on it till it be destroyed. Like a sword they pierce the soul, 1 Tim. vi. 10; like a fire they burn it, Rom. i. 27; and like water they drown it, 1 Tim. vi. 9; for they are in the heart like the devil in the swine, that will not let the soul rest till it destroy itself.

(3.) They war amongst themselves, Jam. iv. 1. For tho’

there is a sweet harmony amongst all the graces, yet lusts may be most contrary one to another. This makes the heart often like a troubled sea, and puts a man on the rack, one lust drawing him one way, and another another way. Pride will put one forward to that which covetousness draws him back from. And the service of lusts must needs be difficult, in that they that serve them serve contrary masters.

4. They are deceitful lusts, Eph. iv. 22. They are the deceivers of the soul, which, by pleasing the corrupt heart, destroy the soul; like Ezekiel's roll, sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the belly. They are a hook to the soul, covered with a taking bait; the silken cords wherewith Satan draws men into destruction.

5. They are hurtful lusts, 1 Tim. vi. 9. They are hurtful to the soul and to the body, to ourselves and others. Being the brood of hell from a corrupt nature, they cannot be harmless; and therefore where no hurt can be done, they cannot enter, Rev. xxi. ult. The softest of them is as a bier, and sharper than a thorn hedge, and always at length pierce the soul with many sorrows. They never fail to leave a sting behind them in the soul.

6. They are worldly lusts, Tit ii. 12. They have nothing of heaven in them. They range through the world, and feed on that which it does afford; and nothing but what is carnal can please them. They partake of the nature of the serpent, for dust is their meat, and on their belly do they go.

7. They are unsatiable lusts 'greedy dogs that can never have enough,' Isa. lvii. 10. To feed them is but to enlarge their appetite, for they cry, Give, give, like the grave and the barren womb, Eccl. i. 8. Surfeited they may be, satisfied they can never be. They have a heavy task of it, that have them to provide for; no wonder they can get no other thing minded, as a poor woman that has a company of hungry babes ever hanging about her hand, and crying out of hunger.

*Lastly,* They are former lusts, 1 Pet. i. 14. Their reign is in the black state of nature. And indeed in all they are foremost on the throne, they have the start of grace always, being born with us, in the virtue of their cause, the corruption of nature. And the power of them must be broken by grace coming in on them, or we perish.



A view of these lusts in the glass of this holy law must needs be very humbling, and stain the pride of all glory. Though the outside be never so clean, they make a foul inside. For consider,

1. They are the members of the old man, Col. iii. 5. The corruption of nature is the old man, they are his members, which together make up the body of sin. Now, this old man being entire in all the unregenerate, these lusts are all in them; nay, even in the regenerate, so far as the corruption of nature still dwells in them, though the power of them be broken, yet they still remain, and afford work to them for daily mortification. So that there is none who may not proportionally take that character to themselves, 'Being filled with all unrighteousness', Rom. i. 29. that is to say, all manner of lusts whatsoever are in the heart of every man, though they do not all break forth in their lives. Consider,

(1.) The same corruption of nature is in all men whatsoever; all are originally and universally corrupt, John iii. 6. There must then be a disposition in all to every evil thing habitually, though not actually. Dost thou see the most abominable lusts breaking forth in the lives of the worst; smite on thy breast, and say, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' and read thy own heart in their profligate lives, Prov. xxvii. 19. 'As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man. When thou readest the law of God against these abominations which are not so much as to be named, conclude that these lusts are in thy heart, for God gives no laws in vain.

(2.) What is it man will not do when grace restrains not, and temptation draws forward? Who would have thought the lust of adultery had been in David's heart, of idolatry in Solomon's after the Lord had appeared to him twice, blasphemy in the saints mentioned by Paul, Acts xxvi. 11; or incest in Lot's daughters? But in such a case they broke forth, which they had not done if they had not been within before.

(3.) They are the tinder answering the sparks of Satan's temptations in the world. It was the peculiar privilege of the man Christ since Adam fell, that the prince of this world had nothing in him, John xiv. 30. There is never a temptation goes abroad in the world, but there is a lust in the heart a

kin to it, so that no wonder they embrace one another as friends when they meet. Satan by this means, be his temptation what it will, has always something to work upon, a fire to blow up. So that in every case whatsoever, that holds true, 'He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool,' Prov. xxviii. 26.

(4.) They are the filthy matter ready to gather together in a boil in the heart, which being ripened, may break forth in the life, Jam. i. 14. They make way for gross sins, as the seed grows up into a tree that brings forth its natural fruit at length.

(5.) They are the fit opposers of every good motion, Gal. v. 17. So that there is never a good impression made upon, nor motion in the heart, but among these lusts it finds a peculiar opposite to it, one fit to engage against it, by a peculiar malignity in it. And so it is found in the godly, that as they have grace for grace in Christ, so they have corruption for grace in the unrenewed part; still some one lineament of Satan's image to set against another of God's image.

And now these lusts have their lustings and stirrings, a view of which must be very humbling. For consider,

1st, The innumerable occasions of them; at every blink of the eye, opening of the ear, or imagination of the heart, we are in hazard of them. The sparks of temptation are continually flying about us; how can we be safe, while we have these as gunpowder about us?

2dly, How suddenly they will flee through the heart like a stitch in the side, or an arrow out of a bow? A thought, a wish, is soon brought forth.

3dly, How frequent are they? when are we free of them? when is it that the crooked leg can move, and not halt?

Lastly, How little are these things noticed? That hellish steam arising from a corrupt nature, being so much within doors, is little regarded, but extremely blackens the soul.

Thus much of the bitter streams; we come now to the fountain and spring-head, from whence they have their rise; and that is, the corruption of nature. For as there is a poisonous nature in the serpent, besides its throwing out of its venom; so, besides the sinful lustings of the heart, there is an habitual corruption of the nature, which is the root of these lustings, loathings, and inordinate motions. The reason why the clock or dial points the hour wrong is, because

it is wrong set ; and till that set be altered, it will never point right. So man's nature has a wrong set, which we call the corruption of nature, whereby it comes to pass that he can never act right till that set be cured by regeneration. It is a corrupt disposition of the soul, whereby it is unapt for any thing truly good, and prone to evil.

The understanding is deprived of its primitive light and ability, unable to think a good thought, 2 Cor. iii. 5 ; yea, darkness is over all that region, Eph. v. 8. As for the will, it is free to evil, but not to good, utterly unable so much as rightly to will any thing truly good, Phil. ii. 13. Nay, it is averse to it as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. It is prone and bent to evil, Hos. xi. 7 ; but lies cross and contrary to God and goodness, Rom. viii. 7. The affections are quite disordered, misplaced as to their objects, loving what they should hate, and hating what they should love ; or if right as to the objects, they can keep no bounds. But of this I have spoke largely elsewhere \*.

This corruption of nature is here forbidden, for it is truly and properly sin, Rom. vi. 12. and vii. 17. It is the flesh that lusteth against the Spirit, Gal. v. 18 ; and if sin, it must be contrary to and forbidden by the law. And as sinful anger is forbidden in the sixth commandment, as the immediate fountain of murder, Matth. v. 21, 22 ; so, by a parity of reason, the corruption of nature is forbidden here, as the immediate fountain of that coveting or lusting, expressed therein.

And though it is impossible for us to prevent this sin, being born with it, it would be considered, that this law was originally given to Adam in innocency, requiring him to keep his nature pure and uncorrupted, and so discharging all corruption of it ; which law, after his sin, remains in as full force as ever. And that the second Adam might answer the demands of the law in this point, he was born without this corruption and continued ever free from it. And those that are his, being regenerated are freed from the reigning power of it, and partake of a new nature.

If we look to this sin, we have a humbling view of ourselves, and must cry, Unclean, unclean.

1. It is the fountain of all actual transgressions, Mark vii.

\* See Fourfold State.



21. Look to all the disorders of thy heart and life; they flow natively from hence, as the poisonous streams from the im poisoned fountain. Look to the disorders appearing in the lives of others, the fountain from whence they proceed is in thee. And if the cause be there, and the effect follow not, thank God and not thyself.

2. All particular lusts are in it, as in the seed. It is the seed-plot of all particular sins. It is the cursed ground, where, let the gardener weed as he will, new ones will still spring up. It is the cage of unclean birds, the mystery of iniquity, which we will never get to the ground of till the foundations be overturned at death.

3. We never were without it, Psal. li. 5. It is a natural and hereditary disease that cannot be cured without a miracle. We dread the serpent that is naturally poisonous, more than any thing that is accidentally so. So may we dread this beyond all things else. When we were not capable of actually sinning, this made us guilty creatures.

4. We never are free of it, while awake or asleep. It is a permanent and abiding sin. Actual sins are transient, tho' not as to the guilt of them, yet as to the being of them; but whether the guilt of this be removed or not, it abides as fixed with bands of iron and brass.

*Lastly,* We never will be free of it while we live. If we die out of Christ it will never be cured. But even though we be in him, yet it abides till death, and will never be totally removed till then.

Thus I have now gone through the ten commands, labouring to lay before you the commandment in its exceeding breadth. And though I have been far from reaching all the particular duties commanded, and sins forbidden; yet, from the whole of what has been said, ye may see,

1. What a holy God we have to do with. We see his holiness in this law as in a glass. He can endure no evil thing; and there are many things which the world reckons not upon, which he abhors, and will punish.

2. What a holy law this law is, requiring all purity of nature, heart, lip and life; a perfection both of parts and degrees; discharging all manner of impurity and moral imperfection, not only in the substance, but in the manner of action.

3. That by the works of the law no flesh can be justified

Who can come up to the perfection this law requires? what one line is there of this law that does not condemn us? where is that one point to the perfection of which we attain.

4. The preciousness and excellency of Christ, who has fulfilled this law in all its parts, has brought in everlasting righteousness, and furnishes all that believe in him with an answer to all its demands.

5. The rule of righteousness, by which ye are to examine yourselves, to see your sins and shortcomings, the mark ye are to aim at if ye would be holy in all manner of conversation, which is nothing the easier to be hit that it is so broad, and the evidence of your sincerity, in a perfection of those parts, though ye cannot attain to the degrees.

*Lastly*, Your absolute need of Christ, of his blood to sprinkle you from guilt, and of his Spirit to sanctify you, that ye may be complete in him. And therefore let this holy law be your schoolmaster to bring you to Christ for all.

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OF MAN'S INABILITY TO KEEP THE LAW PERFECTLY.

ECCLES. vii. 20.—*For there is not a just man upon earth, that doth good, and sinneth not.*

**H**AVING at considerable length endeavoured to open up and explain the law of God, as abridged in the ten commandments, in some measure in its spirituality and extent, by describing the several duties required, and sins forbidden therein; and shewn the absolute impossibility of yielding a perfect obedience thereto, in order to give a title to eternal life; and directed you to come to Christ by faith, as the end of the law for righteousness, that your guilt may be removed by the application of his blood to your consciences, and that ye may be sanctified by his Spirit: I now proceed to the exposition of the remaining questions in the Catechism, which I shall mostly discuss in a very short dis-

course on each, as I have been so long on the former part of this excellent composition.\*

Here is the undoubted character of all the human race, fixing imperfection and sinfulness on the best of the kind in this world, and so concluding all to be liable to sin, and under it. In the words there are two things.

1. A position, *There is not a just man upon earth.* By the *just man* in this text is not meant an evangelically just man, or one just in respect of parts, though not of degrees; but one who is legally so, just in the eye of the law, as having yielded perfect obedience to all its commands; this is plain from the original pointing. Compare Psal. cxliii. 2. 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' By this time the man Christ had not appeared on the earth: so it is meant of mere men. *On the earth*; to denote that in heaven they are just in that sense, arrived to legal perfection.

2. The explication of it: There is none *who doth good, and sinneth not.* There are some who do good, as all the godly; but they sin withal, and that daily, for so the word is to be understood of their using to sin.

The doctrine arising from the words is,

DOCT. 'Legal perfection is not attainable in this life, but the best sin daily.' Or, 'No mere man, since the fall, is able, in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them, in thought, word, and deed.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

\* As some readers may be apt to think, in regard several of the following discourses are very short, that they are not so full as they were delivered, it is necessary to inform them, that, besides what the author has here said of his intended brevity, he was generally a short preacher, seldom, on ordinary occasions, exceeding half an hour, and that his delivery was somewhat slow. Besides, we have the testimony of his dear friends Mess. Wilton, Davidson, and Colden, that he generally wrote his sermons as full as he delivered them. See the preface to his sermons on afflictions. And it is believed, that the attentive reader, upon a careful perusal of this last part of the work, will find the several subjects sufficiently, though briefly, illustrated, for promoting his best and most essential interests.



I. Shew what is legal perfection, or perfect keeping of the commands.

II. Consider the attainableness of this perfection.

III. Shew how the saints sin daily, and break the commands.

IV. Confirm the point, That perfection is not attainable in this life.

V. Give the reason of this dispensation.

VI. Apply.

I. I shall shew what is legal perfection, or perfect keeping of the commands. It is a perfect conformity of heart and life to the commands of God; and implies,

1. A perfection of the principle of action, Matth. xxii. 37. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' For if the heart and soul be not sinless and pure, as in innocent Adam and Christ, but be polluted as our nature is, there can be no perfect keeping of the commands of God. That pollution will stain all.

2. A perfection of the parts of obedience. No part must be lacking, every command of whatsoever nature must be kept: 'For it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,' Gal. iii. 10. If one be wanting, all is wanting, all is marred. Hence says James, chap. ii. 10. 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.'

3. A perfection of degrees in every part, Matth. xxii. 37. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.' Sincerity is not enough in the eye of the law. In every thing one must come to the highest pitch, or there is no perfection.

4. A perfection of duration or continuance, Gal. iii. 10. forecited; without apostasy or defection, continuing to the end; for one bad trip after a course of obedience will mar all.

II. Let us consider the attainableness of this perfection.

1. Adam before the fall was able to have kept the commands perfectly; he might have attained it; for 'God made him upright,' Eccl. vii. 29. That law was the rule of Adam's covenant-obedience; and perfect obedience to it

was the condition of the covenant, which God could not have proposed to him, if he had not given him strength sufficient to perform it.

2. The man Christ, who was not a mere man, but God-man, was not only able to keep the law perfectly, but actually did so. He made out what the first Adam failed in, to the salvation of the elect, and in their stead; and this in the whole extent of legal perfection. His obedience was perfect in the principle, Heb. vii. 26. being ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;’ in the parts, Matth. iii. 15. ‘It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness?’ in the degrees, John xv. 13. ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;’ and in continuance, Phil. ii. 8. ‘He became obedient unto death.’

3. The saints in heaven are able, and do actually perfectly obey whatever God’s will to them is: so that though in this life they do not attain it, yet in the life to come all the children of God shall attain perfection, Heb. xii. 23. where mention is made of ‘the spirits of just men made perfect;’ and there they shall be fully freed from sin, and all possibility of sinning.

4. But since Adam fell, no mere man is able, while in this life, either of himself, or by virtue of any grace now given, to keep the commands perfectly. Of himself he cannot do it; neither is there any measure of grace given to any in this life, whereby they may be enabled to do it: For ‘in many things we offend all,’ Jam. iii. 2. This inability is owing to the remains of corruption that cleaves to every one of them in this mortal state, Rom. vii. 23; and from which they ardently long to be delivered, ver. 24. And there is no promise of grace given in the word, whereby believers may be enabled to keep the commands of God perfectly; nor would it be consistent with the nature of spiritual growth, which is manifestly, like the natural, gradual; and it is certain that the saints do not arrive at their full stature, till they come to the mansions of bliss, 1 Thess. iii. 13.

III. I shall shew how the saints sin daily, and break the commands. And here I shall consider,

1. How many ways the commands may be broken.

2. In what respect the saints sin daily.

3. How these failures of theirs break the commands.

*First*, I am to shew how many ways the commands may be broken. They may be broken three ways, in deeds, words, and thoughts.

1. In deeds, done contrary to the command of God, or not done, though required. God's commands are the rule of men's outward life and conversation; and whatever we do or commit contrary to the law, is our sin, whether it be public, private, or secret, Psal. xiv. 2, 3.

2. In words, either speaking what we ought not, or not speaking what we ought, or speaking what we ought, but not in the manner commanded. (The same is to be said of actions or deeds.) God's commands are a rule to our tongues, and tell us what to speak, how to speak, and what not to speak; and by regardlessness of the rule, the tongue is 'a fire, a world of iniquity,' Jam. iii. 6.

3. In thoughts. Here God's laws goes beyond men's laws as to the whole kind; for our thoughts are open to God, who is omniscient, as words or actions are equally open to him, Heb. iv. 13. and liable to his law. For says Christ, 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart, Matt. v. 28. And so one may sin by thinking what he ought not, by omitting of good thoughts, and by not managing good thoughts, in the manner required by the law.

*Secondly*, I shall shew in what respect the saints sin daily, in thought, word, and deed.

1. Negatively: not that the saints fall into gross sins daily, against the letter of the law, either in thought, word, or deed. God will disown those for saints who entertain vile thoughts daily, swear daily, lie daily, do unjust things, or neglect his worship daily, Gal. v. 19,—21; 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I also have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' Such spots are not the spots of God's people. Christ's dwelling by his spirit in them, the breaking of the reign of sin in them by the power of divine grace, and their habitual tenderness and watchfulness, hold them off that way of life. But,

2. Positively. Besides that saints may be surprised into



gross sins in thought, word, and deed, sometimes by inadvertency, weakness, and violence of temptation, which is the burden of their souls, they sin every day in thought, word, and deed, when they keep the strictest watch, and have most of the divine assistance. What day passes, if without vile thoughts, yet without vain ones; without idle words, if without mischievous words; when there is not something done or undone, which God's law condemns, though perhaps the world cannot quarrel them? Besides, what good thought is thought, good word spoken, or good deed done by them, which the holy law will not spy a flaw in, as to the manner of its performance?

*Thirdly*, I am to shew how these failures of theirs break thy commands, while they sincerely endeavour to obey them. Why, the moral law is the eternal rule of righteousness, and in whatever state the creature be, he is bound to obey his Creator, whether in a state of nature or grace, glory, or damnation. And though perfection be not attainable in this life, yet it is the saints duty, as well as that of others, Matth. v. ult. 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' So every coming short of that perfection is their sin, needing to be taken away by Christ's blood.

And thus men daily break the commands of God in thought word and deed; which is the only possible way of transgressing the divine law; and our doing so in these respects shews the equity of that charge which the Lord has against every man, 'Behold thou hast done evil, as thou couldst,' Jer iii. 5.

IV. I shall now confirm the point, That perfection is not attainable in this life.

1. The scripture attests, that there is no man without sin, 1 Kings viii. 46; 'For there is no man that sinneth not:' and that 'in many things we offend all,' Jam. iii. 2; If any set up for it in himself, the Spirit of God says he deceives himself, 1 John i. 8; See an unanswerable question, Prov. xx. 9; 'Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?'

2. The best have a corrupt as well as a gracious principle, making the spiritual combat, never ending till death give the separating stroke, Gal. v. 17; 'For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are

contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.'

3. We are taught always to pray for pardon, 'Forgive us our debts: ' but sinless creatures needs no pardons. This clearly shews, that all sin, and so come short of perfect obedience.

4. *Lastly*, Consider the spirituality of the law, and its extent, with human weakness, and you will see this clearly. And hence it is that perfectionists are strangers to the spirituality of the law: for if they rightly viewed it, they would be far from dreaming of having attained to perfection, which never a mere man did in this life.

*Object.* Noah was perfect, Gen. vi. 9; \* Job perfect, Job

\* In order to illustrate the character of Noah as a righteous and perfect man, and to shew the signification of these epithets, it will not be improper to subjoin the following note, taken from a manuscript work of the author's, which he left prepared for the press, and has been esteemed by proper judges, both at home and abroad, a work of very great learning and merit, but has not yet been printed, entitled "A new translation of the first twenty-three chapters of Genesis, with notes explanatory and critical," according to the principles of the Hebrew accentuation as delivered in his treatise entitled, *Tractatus sigmologicus Hebræo-Biblicus*, printed at Amsterdam in 1738.

Gen. vi. 9. "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations." "As for Noah; [being] a righteous man, he was found in his generations:" q. d. found; [found] in his generations. A found man is a man of integrity and Godly simplicity, wholly for God, entire in his obedience, keeping himself uncorrupted and unspotted from the world, in which he lives. Such a man was Noah; and such he was, in both the generations wherein he lived, before and after the flood. Thus his character consists of two parts: he was a found man, and preserved to the end in his soundness. And both these are traced to their common spring-head, namely, his righteous state. Being righteous by faith, a justified man; he was a found man, in true holiness of heart and life; and a preserving man: Agreeable to which is that of the prophet, Hab. ii. 4. "The righteous (i. e. by) his faith, shall live." *Tzaddik*, an adjective righteous, a substantive a righteous one, is derived from the root *Tzadak*, in the form *Pihel* (*Tziddek*), as appears by the *Dagesch forte* in it. *Tzadak* (*Kal*) is not to be reputed righteous; that agrees not to it, chap. xxxviii. 26; nor to do righteously; that agrees not to it, Job ix. 20. Psal. xix. 10: but to be righteous; which agrees to it every where. Only it is to be observed, that being righteous is sometimes understood simply of existing righteous, as Gen. xxxviii. 26. Psal. xix. 10. sometimes of appearing righteous, as Job ix. 20, xiii. 18. & xl. 3. Psal. li. 6-4th; and this agreeable to the scripture-style in other cases, as Matth. v. 45. "That ye may be (i. e. appear to be) the children of your Father." To state the formal notion of righteousness signified by this root, it is to be

i. 8. *Ans.* They, and all saints, have a gospel-perfection, which is a perfection of parts. They had a comparative perfection; that is, they were more holy and circumspect than many others. But that they were not legally and absolutely perfect, is clear from Noah's drunkenness and Job's

observed, that it is used of men, as Gen. xxxviii. 26. Job ix. 20. of God himself, Psal. li. 6-4th; of his laws, Psal. xix. 10; and once it occurs in *Niphal*, *Nitzdak*, which, as a neuter verb of being (as Gen. i. 15.) is to become righteous, and is used of God's sanctuary, viz. Dan. viii. 14. "And it shall become righteous, the sanctuary," i. e. in such a state or condition as, by God's appointment, it ought to be in. From all which it appears, that the formal notion of righteousness is conformity to the law given concerning the subject, as concerning men, or the sanctuary or to the eternal idea of righteousness, in the mind of God, as in the case of God himself and his laws. *Tziddek* (*Pih.*) *Hitzdik* (*Hiph.*) are both active, and found to justify or make righteous, the action in *Kal* being the complement of both, as chap. viii. 14. But the difference lies here. In no form whatsoever doth this verb import a moral or real change: but in *Pihel* it signifies manifestatively, *Hiphil*, declaratively. In *Pihel* it occurs five times, and accordingly signifies to shew one righteous, or to make appear righteous, Job xxxii. 32. "I have desired to shew the righteous," viz. as one shews a thing that is hid, by taking away the cover. Thus Jerusalem shewed Sodom and Samaria righteous, Ezek. xvi. 51, 52; namely, comparatively righteous, the holiness of Jerusalem being gone, which, while it lasted, quite darkened them. And so the backsliding Israel, Jer. iii. 11. "shewed her own foul righteous: from the treacherous Judah," namely, as a servant running away from a master whom he hath served but a short while, shews his deserting of him just, by an old servant's running away from the same master at length. Thus understand the ground of Elihu's anger against Job, chap. xxxii. 2. His shewing his foul righteous; from God, i. e. his justifying himself in his grievous complaints, from the way and manner of the Lord's dealing with him. Hereto agrees *Hitzdaddek* (*Hithp.* the relative of *Pih.*), which is to shew one's self-righteous, occurring only, Gen. xlv. 16. What (i. e. how) how shall we shew ourselves righteous? Comp. Luke xvi. 15. & xx. 20. Thus expound, Rev. xxii. 11. And the righteous, let him shew himself righteous still, viz. by continuing in the practice of good works. And this is the justification the apostle James writes of, to his own countrymen, (Jam. i. 1.) who, knowing the manner of their own language, were in no hazard of mistaking his meaning. Now *Tzaddik*, being immediately derived from *Tziddek*, formally denotes one appearing righteous; the holy language hereby teaching, that whether righteousness be imputed or inherent, it must needs shine forth, not only from the divine appointment, but from the nature of the thing, as a light must needs give light. And to carry along this notion of the word, I write it righteous. Mean while, since there is a false as well as a true appearance of righteousness, one may see how Solomon might forbid a man to be righteous much, Eccl. vii. 16. meaning it of the mere appearance or shew of righteousness, from the notation of the word. Accordingly he adds, *ibid.* And do not (Tithh-haccam) make thyself wise; for which compare Luke xx.



impatience. And where is the saint whose history we have at any length in scripture, but we see their imperfections recorded, to stain the pride of all glory?

But it is not said, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin?' 1 John iii. 9. *Ans.* The meaning is not, that

20. Should feign themselves just men, which in Hebrew would be expressed by *Hitzaddek*, to shew or make one's self to appear righteous; But since no false appearance can take place before the Lord, in all cases wherein God testifies of one righteous, the appearance must be understood to be true, as the thing really is: and so it is in this case of Noah. *Hitzdik* (Hiph.) is once used intransitively, viz. Dan. xii. 3 every where else transitively. The object of it, in its intransitive use, is the conjugate noun *Tz'dakah* understood, as Gen. iii. 6. and it is q. d. to righteous righteousness, i. e. to do righteously. So the formal signification of it, agreeing thereto in its twofold use, is, to make righteous. The sense whereof in the intransitive use, is, according to what is already remarked to do righteously, Dan. xii. 3. 'They that make righteous, of the many, i. e. Those who do righteously, of the many, ver. 2. comprehending all, and divided into two sorts, those that do righteously, and those that do not so. But in the transitive use, the sense of it, is not to make righteous, by infusing of righteousness into a person, making a moral real change on him, as is manifest from Exod. xxiii. 7. I will not make righteous, an unrighteous one, Prov. xvii. 15. Isa. v. 23. This word is never so used. On the contrary, the only proper personal object of it is *Tzaddik*, a righteous one, righteous, and appearing righteous, antecedently to the action thereby signified, Deut. xxv. 1. They shall make righteous even the righteous one. So 1 Kings viii. 32. 2 Chron. vi. 23. 'And for to make righteous a righteous one. So the true sense of it is legally to make righteous, to declare or pronounce righteous;" which natively follows on the back of the action signified by *Pihel*, viz. shewing righteous, and occupies the first and primary signification of *Kal*. And this is the justification Paul treats of. This phrase of making righteous the righteous, is used in the matter of the justification of a sinner before the Lord, Isa. liii. 11. In his knowing; make righteous a righteous one, shall my servant; to the many. The construction and sense of which words is, q. d. "In his being known to the many; my servant shall justify any righteous one to them." In which few words, there is, (1.) The author or efficient cause of justification, viz. Jesus Christ the Father's servant, sitting Judge. Comp. John v. 22. Matth. ix. 6. Acts v. 31. (2.) The object, the elect, all the elect, the many for whom Christ died, ver. 12. (3.) The character in which they stand before him, one by one, to be justified, viz. righteous and appearing righteous. This is no wise inconsistent with the justifying of the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5. if one considers, (4.) How they come to be righteous before him, viz. in his knowing, i. e. by the faith of him, whereby the soul is united to Christ and thereby hath communion with him in his righteousness, and so appears righteous in the borrowed garments before the throne. And for this faith they are debtors to free grace, as well as for the righteousness: for the word knowing, though active in its form; is passive in its sense; as is clear from the construction of the words, *In his knowing to the many*, shewing the faith to

the saints do not sin at all; but that they do not commit sin with the full consent of the will; do not take pleasure and delight in it; do not make a trade of it, as unregenerate persons do; and do not commit the sin unto death, 1 John v. 17, 18.

*Object.* But seeing it is impossible to yield perfect obedience to the law, how is it consistent with the justice and wisdom of God to require of us that which we are not able to perform.

*Ans.* The laws of God are both possible and just; and there is no duty now required of us which he did not endow us with strength in our creation to perform. Yet in our fallen and corrupted estate, perfect obedience is become impracticable through our weakness and aversion to duty. And there can be no injustice in God to require what is impossible for us to perform, when the impossibility solely arises from our own fault. It is not God, but we ourselves, that have made the perfect observation of his laws impossible; and though we have wasted our stock, and are become bankrupts, yet he may in righteousness exact from us that debt of obedience which we justly owe him.

*Object.* But are not believers delivered both from the commanding and condemning power of the law, and how are they then bound to yield any obedience to it?

*Ans.* Believers are certainly delivered as well from the commanding as condemning power of the law, considered only as it is the covenant of works, which requires obedience

be the faith of God's elect, Tit. i. 1. The infinitive active or gerund, is used for the passive frequently, which phraseology our own language bears; as Gen. iv. 13. Psal. xlii. 4. 3d & cxix. 4. (5.) The time of their justification? not from eternity, but in the very instant of their believing in his knowing. (6.) The nature of justification, viz. "a declaring or pronouncing righteous, according to what is really found, and judicially imputed or reckoned, (Jatzdik tzaddik,) He shall make righteous a righteous one. (7.) The free access which all have to this privilege: For the words are not in vain ranged in this order; In his knowing; my servant shall make righteous a righteous one, &c. This is a general truth, whosoever will know Christ shall be righteous, and legally made righteous, before the Lord: though in the mean time, it is the many only who will know him eventually, *Tamim*, found. The import of this word is whole and entire, all of a piece unblemished: So by it is expressed a whole day, Josh. x. 13. and the quality of a sacrifice as without blemish, in the ordinary style of the law, as Lev. i. 3. and so is applied to God's work, Deut. xxxii. 4. and his way, 2 Sam. xxii. 31.

to it in order to justification; but they are by no means delivered from it as it is the law of Christ, or a rule of duty. For the moral law is the eternal rule of righteousness, a transcript of the divine perfections, which every believer is bound to copy after, and to apply to the blood of Jesus for pardon, so far as he falls short of obeying it: for without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Personal holiness is as necessary to the possession of glory, or to a state of perfect holiness and happiness, as is the morning-light to the noon-day warmth and brightness; as is a reasonable soul to a wise, healthy, strong, and full-grown man; as an antecedent is to a consequent; as a part is to the whole; and as motion is necessary to evidence life. And the ten commandments, being the substance of the law of nature, a representation of God's image, and a beam of his holiness, behoved, for ever, unalterably to be a rule of life to mankind, in all possible states, conditions, and circumstances. Nothing but the utter destruction of human nature, and its ceasing to be, could divest them of that office; since God is unchangeable in his image and holiness. Hence their being a rule of life to Adam and his posterity, had no dependence on their becoming the covenant of work: but they would have been that rule, though there never had been any such covenant: yea, whatever covenant was introduced, whether of works or of grace, and whatever form might be put upon them, they behoved still to remain the rule of life. No covenant, no form whatsoever, could ever prejudice this their royal dignity.

V. I shall give the reason of this dispensation. God could make the saints perfect in the moment of conversion. He does it not. So it seems good in his sight. Many things are said to account for this; but what is most satisfying is, that it doth exalt the freedom of grace and the power of it most, Eph. ii. 4, 7; 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us—That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.' The more sins are pardoned to a sinner, he is the deeper in Christ's debt. The faster the root of sin appears in one's nature, the more appears the power of grace in rooting it up. It is surely the glory of our great Pilot, that he brings the broken ship to land, through so many hazards.



*Caution.* Abuse not this doctrine, to think light of sin because of it. It is the worst of diseases which most men die in, and no man is perfectly cured of until death. Make not your way to hell the easier, because of the difficulties in the way to heaven : for they that strive towards perfection here will get it at death, when ye sitting still at your ease will be carried down the stream to destruction.

Keep not ye some particular lust, because none are perfect : for all the saints are perfect in parts, though not in degrees ; so far perfect, as to ‘ hate every known sin,’ Psal. cxix. 128.

*Inf.* 1. There is no justification, favour, and peace with God, by our own works, Psal. cxliii. 2. ‘ In thy sight shall no man living be justified.’ Far less can there be works of supererogation. We must be justified by the righteousness of Christ received by faith, or not at all.

2. Whatever your attainments be, be not proud of them ; your wants and defects may always keep you humble. The barren branches are towering ones, while the fruitful boughs hang down their heads.

3. Inexpressibly miserable is the case of unbelievers. They are without Christ ; they must stand or fall by the law, and it is quite beyond their power to keep it.

4. Bear one another’s burdens ; for every man offends. We are in an hospital where most are dying of their disease, and the best but in the way of recovery.

*Lastly,* Let the struggling saints long for heaven, for there the perfection they would fain be at shall be attained, and not till then. And this may comfort them under all their failures, which they mourn over, that in the other world they shall arrive at full perfection in holiness.

## OF SIN IN ITS AGGRAVATIONS.

EZEK. viii. 15.—*Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these.*

**I**F we look on sin absolutely, and in itself, as it is a transgression of the divine law, no sin is small, but a great evil, greater than any evil of suffering, which men can be exposed to : but if we look on sin comparatively, one sin compared with another, all are not alike, but some greater than others, as we see from these words. Wherein may be observed,

1. Great sins which the prophet had seen, shewn to him in vision by the Lord himself, who knows the sins of all men, with their nature and qualities, ver. 5. 11. 14.

2. Greater sins he was yet to see. He had seen the image of jealousy, namely, the image of Baal, set up at the gate of the altar, ver. 5 ; the chambers of imagery in some of the courts, and the ancients of Israel, at their idolatrous service, ver. 10, 11 ; the women weeping for Tammuz in the court of the women, or of the priests, by which the Lord's courts were turned into stews. These were great abominations, and yet greater than any of these was their worshipping of the sun, ver. 16. and that in God's account ; for it was done in a more sacred place, at the very door of the temple ; it was more public, and had greater contempt of God in it, than the rest.

The text affords this doctrine :

DOCT. ' All sins are not alike ; ' but ' some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others. '

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What is understood by the heinousness of sin.

II. In what respect some sins are more heinous than others.

III. Apply.

I. I am to shew what is understood by the heinousness of sin. Its great offensiveness is hereby understood. Sin may be offensive unto men; but we consider it here as sin, and offensive to God. So for sin to be heinous in the sight of God, implies,

1. That it is offensive to God, displeasing to him, and grieving to his Spirit, Jer. xlv. 4. ‘Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate.’ He cannot away with it, he cannot endure it before his eyes, but shews his indignation against it. It is an abominable thing before the Lord; hence it is called filthiness, uncleanness, vomit, &c. all which provoke loathing; so Rev. iii. 16. it is said ‘I will spue thee out of my mouth.’ It is contrary to his nature and will, and gives him displeasure and offence; and, if it were possible it would disturb his repose, as smoke doth to the eyes, Isa. lxv. 5. ‘These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.’

2. It is greatly offensive to God; for that also is implied in the notion of heinousness; every fault is offensive, but some faults are heinous offences. Such an offence is sin to God. It gives him great offence, Psal. v. 4, 5. ‘Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity.’ Hab. i. 13. ‘Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity. There is no sin that God is indifferent about, none that he can pass without a mark of his indignation on it: He ‘will by no means clear the guilty,’ Exod. xxxiv. 7.

Now here mark well two things.

1. That all sin is heinous in the sight of God, viz. greatly offensive. There are no small sins before God, though some are greater than others; but the least of them is great in itself, and great in his sight, Hab. i. 13. forecited. This is plainly implied, while it is said, ‘Some sins are more heinous than others.’

2. That there are degrees of heinousness. Though the sin which the blinded soul accounts but a mote, is a mountain in the eyes of God and of an enlightened conscience, yet all are not alike for all that; but as some mountains, so some sins are greater than others.



II. I shall shew in what respects some sins are more heinous than others.

*First*, Some sins are in themselves, and in their own nature, more heinous than others. There are some capital offences, as it were which God's wrath does in a special manner burn against, and which are most provoking to the eyes of his glory : such as murder, Gen. iv 10 ; oppression, Hab. ii. 11 ; which are noted to be crying sins ; blasphemy and contempt of God, Exod. v. 2 ; idolatry, Ezek viii ; unbelief, rejecting of Christ, and disobeying the gospel, Matth. xxii. John. iii. 19. 2 Thess. i. 8. But of all sins the most heinous is the sin against the Holy Ghost, Matth. xii. 31.

*Secondly*, Some sins are more heinous than others by their aggravations ; and the greater and more numerous the aggravating circumstances be that attend any sin, it is the more heinous. Now, sins are aggravated, or made greater or more heinous than others,

1. From the persons offending ; the more notable they are, the more heinous are their sins ; as the greater the fire is, the more mischief will it do, if it go out of its place ; the greater the tree is, the more mischief will it do by its fall. Thus one and the same sin is greater in magistrates, ministers, parents, and the aged, than in subjects, people, children and the younger sort. For men's places and offices, which respect the government of others in the way of holiness and justice, aggravate their sins, Rom. ii. 21. 'Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself ? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal.' And so do the greater gifts and profession that one hath, Luke xii. 47. 48. 'That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required : and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more.' And so doth the greater experience of God's goodness which they have had, as in the case of Solomon of whom it is said, 1 Kings xi. 9. 'The Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice.' For such advantages make their sins more pernicious, in respect of the influence of their example on others, as in the

effect of Peter's dissimulation at Antioch, Gal. ii. 13. of whom it is said, 'And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. And these advantages carry them over greater obligations they are under to the Lord.'

2. From the parties offended. Let men consider whom their sins strike against, if they would see how heinous they are. For as a thrust in a leg or arm is not so much grievous as one at the heart, so is it in this case.

1st, Sins immediately against God, his Son, and his Spirit, are more heinous than such sins against man, any man whatsoever, 1 Sam. ii. 25. 'If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him? Thus lying and dissembling to God, is more heinous than lying to men, as appears in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts v. 4. because of the infinite distance of the immediate objects of the sin. Thus, whereas in all sins of the second table, there is a fault against God, and against man too; yet the fault against God, and the injury done to his glory, is the bitterest ingredient in it. Thus David's sin in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah was a great sin in respect of these persons; but see how he confesses it, Psal. li. 4. 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.'

2dly, Sins against superiors in the church, state, and family, are more heinous than the same sins are, if done against persons of their own rank and condition. The reason is, because superiority given of God is such a divine impress on a man, that it makes his character in some sort sacred, as in the case of Moses, Num. xii. 8. Hence it is that disobedience to parents is so heinous a sin, Prov. xxx. 17. 'The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.'

3dly, Sins against those whom we are under special engagements and obligations to, are more heinous than such sins against others we have no such concern in. Religion teaches gratitude, and sets a black mark on ingratitude, Psal. lv. 12. 'For it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have born it; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him.'

*4thly*, Sins against the saints and people of God and more heinous than against others, because of their relation to God, as being those in all the world dearest to him, Matth. xviii. 6. 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.' Such are sins against weak saints, as being more liable to get harm by them than those who are strong Rom. xiv. 15. 'If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.'

*Lastly*, Sins against the common good of all, or of many; for the wider the effects of one sin go, it is still the worse, Josh. xxii. 20. 'Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity.' 'One sinner,' says Solomon, 'destroyeth much good;' and the more the greater is his sin.

3. From the quality of the offence. A sin may be vested with such qualities, as will make it much more heinous than when divested of them. These evil qualities are many; I will reduce them to two Heads.

(1.) *Intrinsic qualities*. Thus sins against the letter of the law are more heinous than others; mother-sins, which are big and bring forth many others, than simple ones; sins consummated by action, than while merely in the heart, Jam. i. 15; sins that are scandalous, than others not so; sins the injury in which to men admits of no reparation, than that of others in which it does. This was the reason why death was the punishment of adultery, not of fornication because in this last case the man was obliged to marry the woman.

(2.) *Extrinsic qualities*; which again are of two sorts.

[1.] Being done against means whereby one might be withheld from sin, Matth. xi. 21, 22. 'Wo unto thee, Chorazin, wo unto thee, Bethsaida: for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.' Thus one's sinning against mercies drawing them from their sin, judgments and rebukes from the word or providence, from God or



men, sinning against the light of one's own conscience, do all of them aggravate sin.

[2.] Being done against bonds one has taken on him against the sin, when men sin against purposes and resolutions of amendment, against their covenants and engagements to the Lord, whereby they are bound to stand off from such courses, Ezek. xvii. 19.

4. From the manner of committing it. Who can imagine, but sin done deliberately, and wilfully, and presumptuously, is more heinous than sin committed through inadvertency and weakness? If one be impudent in his sin, delight in it, and boast of it; if he go on in it obstinately, fall in it frequently, and relapse into it after convictions and humblings for it; every one of these aggravates the guilt.

5. From the time of it, as in the case of Gehazi, 2 Kings v. 26. where Elisha says to him, 'Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and olive yards, and vine-yards, and sheep, and oxen. and men-servants, and maid servants?' Thus sins committed on the Lord's day, immediately before or after divine worship, are more heinous than at other times. And so is sinning just after reproofs, warnings, engagements; or in a time when the anger of the Lord is going out against the land, family, or person, as Ahaz in his distress.

*Lastly*, From the place of it. Thus in a place where the gospel is preached, sin is more heinous than elsewhere, Isa. xxvi. 10. 'Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord.' Sins done in public before others, are more heinous than those in secret; for in the former many may be defiled, as in the case of Absalom, lying with his father's concubine on the house top.

A few inferences shall conclude this subject.

*Inf.* 1. Never think light of sin, nor slightly of Christ, and your need of him, since all sin is heinous in God's sight, and exposes the sinner to his just vengeance.

2. There will be degrees of torment in hell, though the least degree will be dreadful, Matth. xi. 21. since there are degrees of sinning.

3. No wonder God's anger go out against us, and the

land wherein, and the generation amongst whom we live: For heinous are our sins beyond those of many, and a frightful look may we get of them in this glass. Magistrates, ministers, parents, the aged, professors, sons and daughters of the Lord, have corrupted their ways, as well as others. Our sins have struck immediately against God, and against those who are vested with his authority in the state, in the church, and in families, against his people, and the common good. Sins against the letter of the law, scandalous offences abound, over the belly of light, mercies, and judgments, covenants national, sacramental, and personal; and these continued in obstinately, in a time when the Lord's hand has oft been stretched out and drawn in again, in a land of light.

4. Repent, and flee to the blood of Christ for pardon, if so be our heinous sins may not be our ruin.

5. The means of grace which we enjoy will either promote our salvation, or they will aggravate our damnation.

6. When ye examine yourselves, and think on your sins, consider the several aggravations of them; and lie deep in the dust before the Lord on account thereof; and, through the grace of God, abstain from every sin, and all appearance of evil.

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#### OF THE DESERT OF SIN.

GAL. iii. 10.—*It is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*

**T**HOUGH some sins be greater than others, yet there is no sin but deserves damnation, which we can nowhere better learn than from the voice of the law, which is the verdict of a just God upon the demerit of sin. This verdict in the text is found written, Deut. xxvii. ult. 'Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them.' And herein consider,

1. The party condemned by the law; *every* sinner. The law condemns him for omissions as well as commissions, for breaking off from obedience as well as never entering upon

it; for every sin, even the least sin, the least breach of the law; as well as the greatest: *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, &c.*

2. The doom pronounced in all these cases, is God's wrath and curse; *Cursed is he that continueth not in all things, &c.* This curse binds over to wrath in this life and that which is to come. It is God's own voice in his law, whose justice will not allow him to fix a punishment on sin greater than it deserves. Hence the doctrine is,

DOCT. 'Every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come.'

Here I shall shew,

I. What is God's wrath and curse, which every sin deserves.

II. What this wrath and curse is.

III. That there is no sin which does not deserve God's wrath and curse.

IV. Deduce some inferences.

I. I shall shew, what is God's wrath and curse, which every sin deserves.

*First*, God's wrath is no passion nor is there any perturbation in God, though an angry God. His wrath is a fire without smoke, and may be taken up in these two things.

1. God's displeasure against the sinner, Psal. v. 4, 5. 'For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' Sin makes the soul loathsome and hateful in God's sight, kindles a holy fire in his heart against the sinner. Were the sun continually under a cloud, and the heavens always covered with blackness, none of these would be comparable to the state of a sinner under wrath, Psal. xc. 11. 'Who knoweth the power of thine anger?'

2. God's dealing with sinners as his enemies, whom he is incensed against, Neh. i. 2. 'God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth, the Lord revengeth and is furious, the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries; and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.' Isa. i. 24. 'Ah! I will ease me of my adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.' The wrath of



a king is as the roaring of a lion; what then must the wrath of God be, an enemy, whom we can neither fight nor flee from, neither outwit nor outbrave? Of this wrath it is said, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.\*

*Secondly*, His curse is his separating one to evil, Deut. xxix. 21. ‘And the Lord shall separate him unto evil, out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses that are written in this book of the law.’ It is a devoting the sinner to destruction, to all the direful effects of the divine wrath. It is the tying of the sinner to the stake, setting him up for the mark of God’s vengeance, that a broken law and offended justice may disburden all their arrows into him, and that on him may meet together all miseries and plagues, flowing from the wrath of God\*.

II. I shall shew, what is God’s wrath and curse in this life and that which is to come.

1. In this life they comprehend all the miseries of this world which one meets with on this side of time, miseries on the body, relations, name, estate, employment; miseries on the soul, as blindness, hardness vile affections, horrors of conscience, &c. and, finally, death in the separation of soul and body. Thus they make a flood of miseries in this life.

2. In the life to come, they comprehend eternal death and damnation, and an eternal being under the punishment of loss and sense in hell. So they make a shoreless sea of miseries in the life to come. But of both these I spoke largely in a former part of this work. [Vol. i.]

III. I proceed to shew, that there is no sin which does not deserve these, but that every sin deserves this wrath and curse.

1. The wages of every sin is death, Rom. vi. 23. that is, eternal death, as is clear from the opposition to eternal life, Rom. v. 12 ‘As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.’ Job xxiv. 19. ‘The grave consumes those which have sinned.’

\* See a more particular account of the curse, in the author’s *View of the Covenant of Works*, part 4. published in 1772.

2. Every sin is a breach of the law ; and he who breaks it in one point, is guilty of all, Jam. ii. 10 ; He who is guilty of all deserves the wrath of God both in this life and that which is to come. The commands of the law have all one author, whose majesty is offended by whatsoever breach ; they all meet in one command, viz. love, and every sin is against that ; the law requires universal obedience.

3. Christ died for all the sins of all his elect, 1 Pet. iii. 18. 1 John i. 7 ; Wherefore, since he suffered God's wrath and curse for them, they certainly deserve it.

4. The least sin will condemn a man, if it be not forgiven, Matt. v. 19 ; even idle words, Matt. xii. 36, 37 ; and all must be forgiven graciously, Psal. ciii. 2 ; wherefore God might in justice not forgive them ; and if never forgiven, they may be ever punished.

IV. I come to shew, why every sin deserves so much. The reason is, it is a kind of infinite evil ; and therefore, since the punishment is deservedly proportioned to the offence, it deserves infinite punishment. Sin is an infinite evil in two respects.

1. In respect that the guilt and defilement of it is never taken away, but endures for ever, unless the Lord himself in mercy do remove it. The party offended is the eternal God, whose being never comes to an end ; the sinner never being able to expiate and put away his offence, Rom. v. 6. it ever remains, unless the Lord himself do remove it, as in the elect, by his Son's blood ; wherefore the party offended, and the offence ever remaining, the punishment must needs be eternal ; for no unclean thing can ever enter heaven, therefore the sinner must be for ever excluded and punished.

2. In respect it wrongs an infinite God. It is evident among men, that the demerit of a crime rises and falls according to the quality of the person against whom it is committed ; so that a crime against one's prince is punished with death, that would not be so, if against a person of meaner condition. Since God, then, is of infinite dignity and majesty, the offence against him deserves infinite punishment. And because the creature, being finite, is not capable of punishment infinite in value, therefore it is necessarily infinite in duration. There is a manifold wrong to God in the least sin.

(1.) It wrongs his infinite sovereignty, Jam. ii. 10, 11; He is Sovereign Ruler of his creatures; his will must be their law, since by his will they were created. But every sin casts off the natural yoke of his sovereign authority, and sets up the sinner's will against it. So that it is accounted a fighting against God, Acts v. 39.

(2.) It wrongs his infinite goodness, Exod. xx. 1, 2; All the good, natural, moral, or spiritual, which the creature has, it has it from God, who is the fountain of all good. So that sin is a doing ill for good, the worst of ills for all the good one ever at any time enjoyed. Yea, it is a turning of the good received from God against him; as if one advanced from the dunghill by his prince, should use all his favours in rebellion against him.

(3.) It wrongs his holiness, Hab. i. 13; He cannot endure unholiness. He is omniscient and omnipresent; so sin brings into the presence of the great King, that which by all things he cannot endure to look at. It sets up the worst of defilement before his spotless holiness; and does in its own nature tend to deface the glory of it.

(4.) *Lastly*, It breaks his law, the eternal rule of righteousness, 1 John iii. 4; It is all right, and of perpetual equity, and is the hedge which God has set about his rational creatures: but sin breaks down that hedge, and breaks over it. And the sinner is a rebel against the King's law, 1 Sam. xv. 23; and in effect sets God at defiance, inasmuch as it breaks the law, to which such a penalty is annexed.

I shall now deduce some inferences.

*Inf. 1.* Let this commend the love of Christ in dying for sinners, Rom. v. 8; O matchless love, which made him willing to be made a curse for us, that we might be delivered from the curse of the law! Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse. What a flood of wrath behoved them to come on him, when he stood in the stead of a whole elect world!

2. Let this convince you of the ill that is in sin. There is more ill in the least sin than the greatest sufferings. Therefore never say, in compliance with a temptation, It is but a little one; for the least sin will make you eternally miserable in hell: and can ye account that a little evil which exposes to God's curse here and hereafter?

3. Inexpressibly terrible is the deserving of many sins, and



gross sins, when the least of them deserves God's wrath. If one do so, how great must that wrath be, which thousands and millions deserve? If an idle word deserves God's wrath and curse, what must deliberate lying words deserve, but a deep footing in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

4. Let believers admire free grace, pardoning mercy, and atoning blood, Psal. xxxii. 1; that secures them from bearing the desert of their sin. Let them live to the Lord, by whom they live. Think not little of your sins, O believer, though there be now no condemnation for you, being in Christ Jesus, Rom. viii. 1; for every one of your sins deserves, though they cannot bring on, God's wrath and curse. Yet tremble at the thoughts of sin; for ye are like the three children in the fiery furnace, compassed with a fire of sin that would burn you up, but the effect of it is stopped by the mediation of Christ.

*Lastly*, Sinners, be convinced of your absolute need of Christ. Ye must be in him, or ye are ruined for ever. Can ye bear that wrath which incensed justice will inflict on all that are out of Christ? Can ye get free of it without him? Wherefore be alarmed, and exhorted to flee from the wrath that is to come, by fleeing to the Lord Jesus, who delivereth all his people from it.



#### OF THE MEANS OF SALVATION IN GENERAL.

HEB. ii. 3.—*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?—*

**A** SINNER having heard that sin deserves God's wrath and curse, the question that natively follows, is, What way one may escape them? This is answered by the weighty question in the text, *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?* Which we may take up in these two things (1.) There is no escaping for sinners, if they neglect the great salvation; they perish without remedy. (2.) They that do not neglect it, shall surely escape. Here let us consider,

1. The danger sinners are in by their sin. They are in hazard of perishing under God's wrath and curse; for that is the just recompence of every sin, Heb. ii. 2; of God's wrath consuming them, and his curse binding them down under it for ever. He intimates, that all are liable to God's wrath and curse, while he says, *How shall we escape, &c.*

2. The way how they may escape; namely, by not neglecting, but falling in with the great salvation. The words intimate, (1.) That there is a possibility of escaping; sinners are not shut up hopeless under the curse. (2.) The way of escape is not by fleeing from the Judge, and the execution of his sentence: nay, he is omniscient and omnipresent; one cannot outwit him, or get away from his sight, or out of his reach. Nor is it by resisting, for he is omnipotent, and none can outbrave him, nor make head against him. But he may escape by falling in with the means of escape appointed by himself, and required by him to be made use of by us. He has provided us with a salvation, a great one; i. e. the gospel, which teaches the way of eternal salvation. He requires us, not to neglect it, but to improve it for our escape. Is neglected by unbelief, impenitency, and not using the means prescribed. On the contrary, then, he requires of us faith and repentance, which are the substance of the gospel, Acts xx. 21; 'testifying to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ;' and he requires of us the use of the means by which the salvation held forth in the gospel is obtained, Prov. viii. 34; 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors:' for surely they neglect and slight the gospel, who do not believe, repent, or use the ordinary means of obtaining the salvation.

The text affords the following doctrine.

DOCTR. 'Whoso would escape God's wrath and curse, must not neglect, but fall in with the great salvation,' Or, 'To escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requireth of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, with the diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption.'

For explaining of this, I shall shew,

I. The necessity of faith in Jesus Christ, in order to one's escaping the wrath and curse of God.

II. The necessity of repentance, in order to the same end.

III. Answer the question, Are faith and repentance in men's power, since God requires them of them?

IV. Shew the connection betwixt faith and repentance, and escaping the wrath and curse of God.

V. The necessity of the diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption.

VI. Deduce an inference or two.

I. I shall shew the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ, in order to one's escaping the wrath and curse of God due to him for sin. It is absolutely necessary; no man can escape God's wrath and curse without it. For,

1. There is no pleasing of God without it, Heb. xi. 6; The reason is, because he is only pleased with Jesus Christ, and those who are in him, or united to him, Matth. xvii. 5; If one should weep for his sins till no moisture were left in his body, fast his flesh to a skeleton, and watch ever so carefully against his sin, if he have not faith, he is a lost man; he cannot please God, but must lie for ever under his displeasure.

2. It is the great duty of the gospel, whereby one is made partaker of the remedy provided, and without which neither your persons nor performances can be accepted. It is 'the work of God,' John vi. 29; 'the command of God,' 1 John iii. 23; Your persons will ever be under condemnation without it, John iii. 18; And all your other duties will be but ciphers in God's account, multiply them as ye will, if faith be not at the head of them.

3. It is that which enters one into the covenant of peace; unites him with Christ, and by which he comes to partake of all saving benefits. If ye would escape God's wrath, ye must be within the covenant; ye must believe, that is, consent to the marriage-covenant, John vi. 35; There is no escaping wrath without being in Christ, and united to him, Rom. viii. 1; That union is by faith, Eph. iii. 17; We must be justified, and that is by faith, Rom. v. 1; and sanctified, which is by faith too, Acts xv. 9.

4. Salvation and damnation turns upon this very point.



Here is the decision of the case, Mark xvi. 16; 'He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' Unbelief will undoubtedly ruin you, Psal. ii. ult. 'Kiss ye the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.' Unbelief is a rejecting of Christ; and they cannot escape who refuse the remedy of sin, Luke xix. 27; 'Those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.'

II. I proceed to shew the necessity of repentance, in order to one's escaping this wrath and curse. No adult person can be saved without it. As for infants dying in their tender years, and such others who are not capable of actual faith and repentance, in so far as the Spirit dwells in them, they have the seed of those graces, and shall undoubtedly be saved.

1. The word of God certifies us, that whosoever does not repent shall perish, Luke xiii. 5; Your souls, then, lie at stake. The sinner is gone away from God, and so is come under the curse. His soul is left in pawn that he shall return; so if he do not return, the pawn is lost, and lost for ever.

2. Heaven's door is bolted against all impenitent sinners; it is not so wide as to let in a sinner with a burden of unrepented-of guilt upon his back, Rev. xxi. 27; 'There shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.' So heaven ye cannot see, and hell ye cannot escape, if ye repent not. It is the call of the gospel to you; which, if it be not obeyed, see the effect, 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. 'The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.' To this narrow point the matter is brought, Repent or perish, Ezek. xviii. 30, 31; 'Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?'

3. Repentance is the other duty of the gospel; thereby signifying, that without repentance there is no possibility but we must perish under God's wrath and curse. John the

Baptist preached repentance, so did Christ himself, the apostles, &c. How can one think then to escape without it?

4. True faith does always bring along with it true repentance, Zech. xii. 10; 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.' It is the great gift which Christ is exalted to give, Acts v. 31; as he is a Saviour. So impenitent sinners have no part in Christ, nor in his salvation, Matth. i. 21; and therefore they must perish.

III. I proceed to consider the question, Are faith and repentance in men's power, since God requires them of them? *Ans.* They are not. For God's demands of us are the measure of our duty, but not of our strength, which reaches not to these. For,

1. They are the gifts of God, and the operations of his special grace, Eph. i. 19. Acts v. 31; And where sovereign pleasure does not determine to give and work them, the party lies under the power of unbelief and impenitency. Hence it is God's grace and good-will which makes one differ from another; not man's free-will. Hence says our Lord, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,' Matt. xi. 25, 26.

2. Sinners by nature, and in themselves, can do nothing which is good, and therefore cannot believe nor repent, John xv. 5; 'Without me ye can do nothing,' 2 Cor. iii. 5; 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God.' In particular they cannot believe, John vi. 44; 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.' They cannot repent, Jer. xiii. 23; 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.' They are dead in sin, and must be quickened, yea, created in Christ Jesus to good works. They are in bondage to sin and Satan, 2 Tim. ii. 26; therefore cannot come to Christ, nor turn to God, till effectual grace bring them forward, Acts xxvi.

18; 'Open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.'

*Object.* How then can God require them of us?

*Ans.* 1. God gave man this power, and he has lost it by his own fault, Eccl. vii. 29; 'God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.' If a debtor squander away his substance, the creditor has still a right to require what he owes him: so, though man has lost his power to perform, God has not lost his right to require the duty.

2. Men will not believe their own impotency. They will promise, resolve, and delay to believe and repent, as if these duties were in their own power; they will slight the motions of God's Spirit; yea, they are throwing away the remains of natural light and strength, that have escaped out of the ruins of the fall. So that God may very justly require these of them, to convince them, and stir them up to seek grace.

IV. I proceed to shew the connection betwixt faith and repentance, and escaping the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin. Those who believe and repent shall certainly escape. God has said it, that they shall, John v. 24; 'He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life,' Ezek. xviii. 30; 'Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.' Nay, they are got beyond it already, Rom. viii. 1; 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' In the moment the sinner comes into Christ, he is no more liable to eternal wrath, nor to the curse; for he is not under the law, but under grace: and the utmost he is liable to, is fatherly chastisements, Psal. lxxxix. 30,—33. Thus faith and repentance have the connection of appointed means prescribed by God himself, which, by his blessing, are rendered subservient to this great end, of obtaining salvation. Faith is the hand that receives Christ and his righteousness, as the all of salvation, John i. 12; and repentance unto life consists in that godly sorrow for sin, flowing from faith, which is the exercise of all who are concerned about the salvation of their souls, Jer. l. 4. 2 Cor. vii. 11.

V. I shall now shew the necessity of using all the outward



means whereby Christ communicateth to his people the benefits of redemption.

1. God has peremptorily required this, Luke xiii. 24. 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate,' namely, that we strive in the appointed means of grace and salvation. And so he has particularly enjoined us the conscientious performance of each of them.

2. We have no ground to expect grace or salvation but in the use of the means, Prov. viii. 34. 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors,' Prov. ii. 3.—5. 'If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding: if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.' 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,' Rom. x. 17.

3. The neglect of the means is a contempt of the thing. If we would be healed, we would lie at the pool. If not, we say we care not for cure.

And there is required here, not a careless or merely superficial use of the outward means, but a diligent one; that is an embracing of every opportunity that God in his providence gives us for attending upon them, a careful improvement of them, and a looking earnestly to him for his blessing upon them, without which they will not contribute to our spiritual advantage, 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

*Quest.* What is our ability in this point! *Ans.* The use of outward means is not beyond our reach. One may without saving grace, read, hear, pray, and consider his case. And by these one may attain the highest pitch of preparation for the grace of God, in legal convictions, fears, sorrows for sin, and natural (though not saving) desires of grace. Therefore, do what ye can; it may be, while ye are doing what ye can, God will do for you what ye cannot do for yourselves, Acts viii. 22.

*Quest.* Has God promised to save and convert those who do what is in their power in the use of means? *Ans.* We dare not say it. But, 1. It is possible. 2. It is probable\*.

I shall conclude with two inferences.

\* See all this illustrated in *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*, State ii, head 3. under the title, *Objections answered*.

*Inf.* 1. Then as ever ye would escape God's wrath and curse due to you for sin, repent and believe. Come to Christ; turn from your sins unto God. There is no safety otherwise, but this way ye shall be safe. No sin of your's will ruin you, if you believe and repent; and nothing will save you, if you do not.

2. Be diligent in the use of the means of salvation. They are laid before you, while they are by the sovereign disposal of Providence, kept up from others. Neglect them not, as ye would not be found to reject the counsel of God against yourselves. And satisfy not yourselves in the bare use of them, but seek grace and salvation in them from Jesus Christ, they being the appointed means of grace.



#### OF FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.

JOHN i. 12.—*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*

**F**AITH in Jesus Christ being the main thing required for one's escaping the wrath and curse of God, we come now to speak of it particularly, from these words. In which we have, (1.) The nature, (2.) The fruit of faith, viz. the privilege and dignity of adoption into God's family. Passing the latter, [See vol. ii.]

We may take notice of the former, viz. the nature of faith, *As many as received*, &c. Wherein consider,

1. What it is in the general. It is a saving grace, for by it one becomes a child of God, and so an heir of heaven.

2. What it is in particular. (1.) The object of it is Christ, he, his name, his person, with his benefits. The acts of it, saving the sinner, are, [1.] *Receiving* him; this is explained to be *believing*. Now, *receiving* implies an offer of him made to the receiver, which is done in the gospel. [2.] *Resting* on him; for it is not a mere believing him, by an historical assent to his word, but a believing on his name, which imports a fiducial recumbency or relying on him, as one who believes

another is said to rest on his word. (2.) The subjects of it are many; not all, but some, namely, the elect of God, quickened by the spirit of regeneration, compare ver. 13. 'Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' These receive Christ for salvation; for he offers himself as a Saviour, and the fruit of it in the text is saving.

The doctrine founded on the text is,

DOCT. 'Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive, and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.'

Here we will consider,

- I. How faith in Christ is a saving grace.
- II. Whence it proceeds.
- III. The subject of faith.
- IV. The object of it.
- V. The saving and justifying acts of it.
- VI. The end of these acts of faith.
- VII. The ground and warrant of it.
- VIII. *Lastly*, Draw an inference or two

I. I shall shew, how faith in Christ is a saving grace. There are four sorts of faith spoken of in scripture. (1.) Historical faith, which is a bare assent to the truths of God, Jam. ii. 19. 'Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well. The devils also believe and tremble.' (2.) A temporary faith, which is such an assent, joined with some affection to the truths of God, though unsanctified, like that of the stony ground hearers, Luke viii. 13. 'who when they hear, receive the word with joy; but these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.'

(3.) The faith of miracles, which is a belief of the Lord's working some miraculous effect by us, or in us, upon some intimation of his word concerning it, 1 Cor. xiii. 2.—'Tho' I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains.' All of these may be in reprobates, and none of them are saving. (4.) Saving faith, already described from the text.

It is called saving faith, because all that have it shall certainly be saved for ever, from sin and God's wrath; yea, as soon as one has it, salvation is his, it is in his possession as to



the beginnings of it, Acts xvi. 31. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

It saves us, not as an act or work, fulfilling the condition of a new law; for so it is excluded, with all other works, from the causing of our salvation, Rom. iii. 27, 28. 'Where is boasting then? it is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.' But it saves us as an instrument, apprehending Christ and his salvation, Rom. iii. 22. 'Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference.' It is as the looking to the brazen serpent, which saved the stung Israelites; or as the hyssop dipped in blood, and sprinkling the leper, that cleansed him.

II. I come to shew, whence this faith proceeds.

1. It is not from our natural powers, the power of man's free-will. 'No man can come to me,' says Christ 'except the Father which hath sent me, draw him,' John vi. 44. It is not a flower of nature's garden; otherwise one should make himself to differ from others.

2. It is a special gift of God. Hence says the apostle to the Philippians, chap i. 29. 'Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ,—to believe on him.' It is wrought in the heart by his divine power, 'through the faith of the opération of God, Col. ii. 12. No less power can produce it, Eph. i. 19. It is ascribed, as to the working of it, to the Father, John vi. 44. forecited; to the Son, Cant. i. 4. 'Draw me;' but in a special manner to the Spirit, Gal. v. 22. 'The fruit of the Spirit is—faith; therefore he is called 'the Spirit of faith,' 2 Cor. iv. 13.

The outward means which the Lord usually makes use of to beget faith in one's heart, is the word, the word of the gospel, preached, heard, or read, Rom. x. 17. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' This is the incorruptible seed which the new creature is framed of, 1 Pet. i. 23. the vehicle of saving influences, Gal. iii. 2.

III. I proceed to consider the subject of faith. It is not all men, 2 Thess. iii. 2. 'For all men have not faith.' They are rare one's who get it, Luke xviii. 8. 'When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? But they are

1. Elect sinners; they only obtain it, Tit. i. 1. And they all do obtain it sooner or later, before they go off the world, Acts xiii. 48. 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' The subjects of it are those of the Old Testament, as well as those under the New. Hence the apostle to the Hebrews, speaking of the former, says, chap. xi. 13. 'These all died in faith.' The subjects of it also are elect infants dying in infancy, though they have not actual faith; who, though they know nothing of the matter, like the Israelitish infants, Deut. i. 29. have the seed or spirit of faith. This is the general character of the subject. But,

2. More particularly, elect convinced sinners are the subjects of it, John xvi, 8, 9. 'When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me.' The plough of the law goes through the heart, in some measure, before this seed be cast into it, Gal. iii. 23, 24. 'Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith, which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.' So that an unconvinced, insensible sinner, is an unbeliever. But,

3. Yet more particularly, elect, convinced, quickened sinners, are the subject thereof, as appears from the text and the following verse. Regeneration in the order of nature goes before believing, and faith is the first vital motion of the regenerated soul. There is first a passive reception of Christ into the soul, whereby Christ comes into the dead soul, and quickens it, and then actual believing, or active receiving of Christ, is the first motion of the new creature. But most particularly,

4. *Lastly*, Not only the understanding, but the heart and will of such a one, is the subject of faith, where it has its seat; the understanding knowing and assenting, and the will embracing and consenting, Isa. liii. 11. 'By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.' Rom. x. 10. 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.'

#### IV. I proceed to consider the object of faith.

1. The real object in general is the whole word of God, and therefore no falsehood can be under faith, Tit. i. 2. But the special real object of it is the promise of the gospel, Acts

xvi. 31. 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,' &c. for therein Christ the Saviour is held forth to a poor sinner. Faith looks to the whole word; it is persuaded of a divine authority in the commands, and an immoveable truth in the threatenings and promises. Every promise of the word it looks to, and comes wrong to none, while the believer lives in this world, and it lasts: it is a bee that roves through all these flowers in the garden of God's word. But as it is saving and justifying, it settles on the promise or offer of Christ in the gospel. And,

(1.) The testimony of the word, concerning Christ's ability to save, is a special object of faith in this case, Mark ix. 33. 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' Sin is a dead weight, which the soul findeth itself unable utterly to hoist up; but the gospel holds out Christ to be able to remove it, Heb. vii. 25. 'He is able to save unto the uttermost.' Faith assents to this too, Psal. lxxv. 3. 'Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.'

This assent in both cases may be mixed with doubting, yet true, Mark ix. 24. 'I believe; help thou mine unbelief.' If the soul have as much faith of both, as to venture itself on Christ, though the bride sign the contract with a trembling heart, though the doubting will never be commended, the subscription will be sustained.

2. The personal object of faith is,

(1.) General: God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as we profess in the creed, John xiv. 1. 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.'

(2.) Special; Jesus Christ, as in the text. He is the object of faith, as it saves and justifies the sinner, typified by the brazen serpent in the wilderness, to which the wounded Israelites were to look, and the look was healing, John iii. 14, 15. And Christ's person is the primary object of justifying faith, Isa. xlv. 22. 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.' And his benefits, merits, righteousness, &c. are the secondary objects thereof, Phil. iii. 8, 9. 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which



is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

V. I proceed to consider the saving and justifying acts of faith. These are,

1. Receiving him as he is offered in the gospel, as in the text; cordially closing with him, and heartily consenting to take him as he is offered. Hereby the spiritual marriage-tie betwixt Christ and the soul is made. Christ gives his consent in the gospel-offer, and the sinner gives his by faith closing with the offer. Now, he is offered in the gospel in all his offices. So faith is a receiving of Christ,

(1.) As a Prophet to be our Teacher, Guide, and Leader, renouncing our own wisdom, Matth. xvii. 5.

(2.) As a Priest, renouncing all merit and confidence in one's self, duties, and sufferings, and betaking one's self to Christ, his obedience and death, for all, Isa. xlv. 24. 'Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.'

(3.) As a King, renouncing all strange lords, and receiving him for absolute Governor in the soul, and over the whole man, yielding to bear the yoke of his commands, and the yoke of his cross. Isa. xxvi. 13. 'O Lord our God, (says the church), other lords besides thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.'

2. Resting on him as he is offered in all his offices too, Isa. xxvi. 3, 4. 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.' 2 Chron. xvi. 8. 'Thou didst rely on the Lord.' The soul has a burden of weakness and ignorance, and therefore rests on him as a Prophet; a burden of guilt, but rests on him as a Priest, laying the weight on his blood; a burden of strong lusts and temptations, but rests on him as a King.

This receiving and resting has a most special eye to the priestly office of Christ, faith in his blood. It is a looking to him as lifted up on the cross, Isa. xlv. 22; eating of his flesh, and drinking of his blood, John vi. 53; and submitting

to his righteousness, Rom. x. 3.\* This receiving and resting upon Christ for salvation is in many places called believing in, or trusting on, Christ as our Saviour †.

VI. I am to shew, what is the end of these acts of faith.

\* See the nature and acts of faith more largely opened and illustrated in the author's View of the Covenant of Grace, head 6. The way of instructing sinners personally and savingly in the Covenant of Grace.

† Now, in order to illustrate the nature of faith, considered as believing in or trusting on God, and the way of a sinner's justification in his sight, it may not be improper to insert here the two following notes on Gen. xv. 6. 'And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness,' taken from the author's manuscript work on the first twenty-three chapters of Genesis, above referred to, p. 232.

'Now he trusted in Jehovah, i. e. Now Abram trusted in Jehovah (who was the Lord promising, as well as the Lord promised), not only believing his word spoken to him at this and other times, but also resting in him, and relying upon him, for all contained in the promise, and especially the salvation of the Messiah, which was the chief thing in it. The whole verse is a parenthesis, in which Moses occasionally shews how Abram entertained the promise, from the first time it was made to him. Now, saith he, Abram trusted in Jehovah, viz. all along, and so at this time, Rom. iv. 3. Gr. For, what saith the scripture? Now Abraham believed God. Jam. ii. 2. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Now Abraham believed God. Comp. the preceding and following verse of this chapter. This is the first place wherein faith is expressly spoken of. *V'he'min*, and he trusted. The formal signification of *H'min*, is to trust; for so it may be rendered every where; and so our translators do render it, Judg. xi. 20, Job iv. 18 xv. 15. 31. & xxiv. 22 marg. Mic. vii. 5. All believing is trusting; but all trusting is not believing, as will appear anon. Accordingly *H'min* is more extensive than believing; for the object of it is a thing; as well as a rational agent, the only proper object of believing. Thus, wonderful works, Psal. lxxviii. 32. one's life, Deut. xxviii. 66. & Job xxiv. 32. and a beast, Job xxxix. 12. are, by this word, said to be trusted in, which cannot well be said to be believed in. The construction of the word natively leads to this notion of it. It is ordinarily constructed with to, as Gen. xlv. 26. He trusted not to them, or in, as here. He trusted in Jehovah: sometimes with a noun simply, and an infinitive, as Judg. xi. 20. Shion trusted not even Israel to pass in his bounds.' And finally, as *H'min*, *Emeth*, *Omnah*, *Emun*, &c. are akin, as branches of one root; so are the words, he trusted, truth, a truth, trueneſs, &c.; answering unto them, in our language. The Greek *πιστewo*, in the New-Testament use of it, is of the same import, signifying to trust: for so it may be rendered every where; and so it must be rendered in several texts, as John ii. 24. Jesus did not trust himself to them. Rom. iii. 2. They were trusted the oracles of God, i. e. trusted with them. So 1 Cor. ix. 17. 1 Theſſ. ii. 4. 1 Tim. i. 11. How *H'min*, being in *Hiphel*, comes to signify to trust, is best accounted for by allowing the phraseology to be elliptical, the conjugate

It is for salvation, Christ's whole salvation. (1.) Salvation from sin, Matth. i. 21; 'He shall save his people from their sins.' (2.) From wrath, 1 Thess. i. ult. 'Which delivereth us from the wrath to come; from the guilt, defilement, dominion, and indwelling of sin. So it is for justification and

noun being understood. So it is q. d. *H' min emunah*, He trusted a trust, or trusting; and the sense of that is, He exercised trust or faith; as to plant forth plant, and to seed seed, Gen. i. 11; is to bring forth plant, and seed, or to yield them. The *ellipsis* of the conjugate noun is usual, as in *Hixiang*, *Hiskil*, &c. chap. iii. 6; and of it there is a double indication in this text. One is the pointing of this word with a distinctive. Comp. 1 Kings xxi. 14; They sent forth (sup. a messenger) unto Jezebel. Isa. i. 17; Plead (sup. the plea) of the widow. The other is the pronoun it, in the latter hemistich, which relates to trust or faith. Now, to trust to is to believe: and accordingly the object of it is always a person, as chap. xlv. 26; forecited; or else a word, as 1 Kings x. 7; I trusted not to the speeches, Isa. liii. 1; Who hath trusted to our hearing, i. e. word heard: the which comes all to one; the word or speech being always pronounced by a person, and the person believed in respect of his word. To trust in, is not only to believe a competent object; but to rest in and rely upon, the person, word, or thing trusted, as firm and sure, for the effect for which he or it is trusted. Thus Achish trusted in David, 1 Sam. xxvii. 12; not only believing his word, ver. 10; but resting and relying on him, as one trusteth in a friend, (Mic. vii. 5.) "saying he hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him, therefore he shall be my servant for ever." So the people brought through the Red Sea, trusted in Moses, Exod. xiv. ult. relying on, and committing themselves to, his conduct: And on the same occasion, they trusted in God's speeches, Psal. cvi. 12; relying on them with confidence. And this the unicorn cannot be trusted in (i. e. relied upon) for bringing home one's seed, Job xxxix. 12; That the apostles Paul and James, in the passages above cited, retain the Seventy's reading of this text, Now Abraham trusted to God, will not evince a perfect identity of the phrases trusting to, and trusting in God; since it is undeniable, that the inspired penmen, in many passages of the Old Testament, adduced by them in the New, do not act the part of rigid translators: but it will evince them to be one in effect. From what is said, it appears, that according to the scripture phraseology, or language of the Holy Ghost, (1.) The nature of faith in general lies, in trusting, trusting a person, word, or thing. (2.) The nature of saving faith, lies in trusting, that is, resting in, and relying upon the person, word, and thing, (proposed to it in the promise,) as firm and sure, for the effect for which it is trusted. (3.) Trusting in the Lord is by the appointment of God, and the nature of the thing, necessarily connected with trusting to him; comp. Isa. liii. 1. John iii. ult. (4.) It is not by the habit, but by an act of faith, a sinner is justified.

And he reckoned it to him, righteousness, i. e. And God, even Jehovah the Son, see the note above, p. 183. fig. (1.) in whom Abram trusted, (hem. 1.) did treat that act of faith or trust in him, which Abram exerted, as if it had been fulfilling of the law, in which one could stand righteous before him, reputed and counting it to him for that effect, and justifying



sanctification. And faith receives and rests on him alone for all these, Gal ii, 16; 'Knowing that a man is not justified, by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ; that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the

him, thereupon, in his sight. *Vajjahh'sch'bheha*, And he reckoned it. Of *Hhaschab*, to reckon. Accordingly *Hbischsheb* (Pih.) is fully to reckon, as Lev. xxv. 50 Psal. cxliv. 3. Jon. i. 4. and *Hithhhaschsheb* (Hithp.) only once occurring, doth manifestly signify to reckon one's self, Num. xxiii. 9; Behold a people . . . in (i. e. among) the nations shall not reckon itself; i. e. a people which, &c. This word is used, (1.) For counting and reckoning, as in matters of money, 2 Kings xxii 7; It would not have been reckoned with them; the silver, Lev. xxv. 50; And he shall fully reckon with his acquirer. (2.) For reputing or counting, as the Latin *habeo, duco*, as Neh. xiii. 13; They were reckoned faithful. (3.) For regarding, prizing, making a valuable account of a person or thing. So it is used, Isa. ii. 22. xiii. 17. xxxiii. 8. and liii. 3; Thus, reckoners of his name, Mal. iii. 16; are those who valued and made a becoming account of it. (4.) For judging, thinking, or accounting so and so of a thing, as Isa. x. 7; His heart will not so reckon, viz. that he is the rod, staff, and sent, of God, ver. 5, 6; concluding concerning it, as Jon. i. 4; It fully reckoned; for to be broken, i. e. fully laid its account therewith. All these agree in the common notion of reckoning, which speaks a view of a thing in several particulars, and a practical judgment formed thereupon. And hence, I think, it is that the word is used, (5.) For contriving or devising, as artists do a piece of work, as Amos vi. 5; They have reckoned (i. e. devised) to them instruments of song. *Tz'dakah*, righteousness. *Tzedek* and *Tz'dakah* are both immediately derived from *Tzadak* (*Kal*), of which see the note above, p. 183 and accordingly signify righteousness: but with this difference, that *Tz'dakah* sounds an acting, as if one might say, righteousness; *Tzedek*, a quality, the principle or result of the former. Hence expound, Deut. xxiv. 13; To thee it shall be righteousness, (*Tz'dakah*), i. e. a doing or acting righteously, a righteous action, a good work, a conforming to the law. An evidence of this difference is, that *Tz'dakah* is often used in the plural number; but *Tzedek* is never. For the former points at a thing, under the notion of a righteous action, or good work, of which kind there are many; but the latter, at a thing, under the notion of a quality, viz. righteousness, which is but one, whatever be the number of the actions which it results from, or is productive of. Thus Judg. v. 11; The righteousnesses of Jehovah, are his righteous acts or works, Isa. lxiv 5; All our righteousnesses are filthy rags, i. e. our good have been as filthy rags. So Isa. xlv 24; Only in Jehovah, to me he said, [are] righteousnesses and strength, i. e. Only in Jesus Christ are good works, that will answer the demands of the law. Howbeit, the word is thus taken objectively, acting for an action or work. On the other side, balances of (*Tzedek*) righteousness, stones of righteousness, Lev. xix. 36; are balances and weights conform to the standard. Thus these two words, frequently occurring, howbeit their signification may to come to one in effect, yet they do, in their formal notion, represent the thing

law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.' So it is a going out of one's self to Christ for all.

VII. I come now to consider the ground and warrant of faith. This is the gospel-offer. (1.) The sinner has his invitation, Isa. lv. 1. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and

under different *scheſes*. Accordingly the righteousness of Christ imputed to believers, is expressed by each of them. His righteousness (*Tizidkatho*) is declared and preached, Psal. xxii. ult.: and he is Jehovah (*Tzidkenu*) our righteousness, Jer. xxiii. 6: the former proposing his righteousness, as the fulfilling of the law; the latter, as conformity to the law, arising therefrom. As the word *Hhafschabbh* is used for devising, chap. vi. 5. it is sometimes constructed, as here, with *L'* to or for, denoting the party for whom the thing is devised, as Amos vi. 5; or the end for which, as Gen. i. 20. But since faith cannot be said to be devised righteousness, that sense of the word, which at best is but secondary, can have no place here. But for clearing the import of this weighty expression, used in the text, according to the scripture-phraſeology, it will be worth the while to inquire into the several phrases, formed with the word *Hhafschabbh*, in the notion of reckoning which is the formal notion of it. I. A person is said to be reckoned with others, i. e. classed with them, and the same account made of him as of them. Thus, Psal. lxxxviii. 5. the Psalmist was reckoned with them that go down to the pit, his case accounted hopeless, even as theirs. II. To reckon one person or thing as another, is to make a like account of them as of the other, and so to treat them after the like manner. Thus Job's friends thought they were reckoned as beasts, Job xviii. 3; and he himself thought, he was reckoned as an enemy of God, chap. xix. 11. and darts are reckoned as flubble by the leviathan, chap. xli. 21-29ths. So Num. xviii. 27. Psal. xlv. 23. If. v. 28 & xl. 15. Hof. viii. 12. III. To reckon one thing for another, is to account it to be that thing: Job xxxv. 2. Hast thou reckoned this for judgment, i. e. reckoned this to be judgment. So Judah reckoned Tamar for an harlot, Gen. xxxviii. 15. Eli, Hannah for a drunken woman, 1 Sam. i. 13. Job, according to Elihu, reckoned God for his enemy, i. e. to be his enemy, Job xxxiii. 10. Thus to be reckoned for righteousness, Psal. cvi. 31. is to be reckoned to be righteousness. So this third phrase falls in with, and is equivalent to the IV. here used by Moses. That is, two terms being proposed, the one is said to be reckoned the other, as faith reckoned righteousness. Concerning this phraseology, *Obſ* 1. It is used of reckoning a thing, what in reality and in very deed it is, antecedently to the reckoning. Thus the treasurers were reckoned faithful, Neh. xiii. 13. as indeed they were; and for that cause Nehemiah put them into that office: the houses in unwall'd villages were to be reckoned upon the field of the land, Lev. xxv. 31. as they were indeed, not being separated from the field by a town-wall: a fool holding his peace is reckoned wise, Prov. xvii. 28. and so he is in that point; the fruitful field shall be reckoned for a forest, If. xxix 17. and so it really is now, and is truly so reckoned; namely, the Jews, sometime God's people, but now rejected. The land of the Ammonites, saith the text, Deut. ii. 20. would have been reckoned a land of giants, i. e. formerly it used to be

eat, yea come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.' (2.) The declaration of God's good pleasure in their so doing, John vi. 29. 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' And, lastly, his peremptory command, 1 John. iii. 23. 'And this is his com-

so reckoned : and justly, for the giants, adds the text, dwelt therein in old time ; however, it neither was so, nor was it so reckoned in Moses' time. The Emims would have been reckoned giants, ver. 11 : and justly so ; for they were tall as the Anakims, ver. 10 ; The scope of the two last passages is, to confirm the Israelites in the faith of their conquest of Canaan, notwithstanding of the Anakims there. For this cause Moses shews them, that the Zamzummins were driven out before the Ammonites, and the Emims before the Moabites, though both the one and the other were reckoned giants. But if they were not really what they were reckoned to be, these instances were nothing to the purpose they are adduced for. And thus the fact of Phinehas was reckoned for righteousness, Psal. cvi. 31 ; i. e. reckoned a righteous action, pleasing to God ; which it really was, hereby done in faith : and hereby it is declared to be so, for an obvious reason, viz. that otherwise men would have been apt to have condemned it. It is without cause alleged, that the text says, It was reckoned, righteousness for generation and generation ; which it was not, being his own personal deed, and not the deed of any of his posterity. For the text stands thus ; And it was reckoned to him for righteousness : for generation and generation ; even to perpetuity ; i. e. it was reckoned to him righteousness : [it was reckoned so] for generation and generation ; even to perpetuity : A token of which was, the priesthood's being continued in his family, from generation to generation. *Obj. 2.* This phrase is used of reckoning a thing, what in very deed it is not, neither prior to the reckoning, nor posterior to it. And in this case, it either, 1. Bears a mistake, which takes place only where the reckoner is capable to form a judgment, but withal is fallible. Thus did Judah's reckoning of Tamar bear a mistaken judgment, Gen. xxxviii. 15 ; Eli's of Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 13 ; the Jews of Christ, while they reckoned him stricken, smitten of God, Isa. liii. 4 ; i. e. an object of God's peculiar hatred, while he was indeed his beloved Son. And such would be the judgment of one, who would reckon the deep hoar hairs, Job xli. 24-32ds. which without question it is not. Or else, 2. The meaning is no more, but that the reckoner treats the thing as if it were that other thing. And thus it is always in three cases. (1). In the case of agents incapable of forming a judgment. So the leviathan reckons iron for straw, Job xli. 19-27ths, which doubtless it is not ; but he treats it as if it were straw. (2.) In the case of fallible judges, in points not liable to mistake. Thus Laban's own daughters were by him reckoned strangers, Gen. xxxi. 15 ; and Job a stranger, by his own domestics, Job xix. 15 ; and Zion's son's, earthen pitchers, by the enemies, Lam. iv. 2 ; in all which cases, there could be no mistaking of the persons reckoned for such persons and things ; but these persons were so treated as if they had been taken for such persons and things. (3.) In the case of the infallible Judge. So Isa. xl. 17, the nations are reckoned of him less than (Pohu, Gen. i. 2.) emptiness : not that they are so in very deed ; for they are creatures made the sixth day,



mandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.'

I shall conclude with a very few inferences.

*Inf.* 1. Faith is a precious thing, 2 Pet. i. 1. Not to be

after (Tohu) emptiness was no more: but that he can so treat them, and annihilate them as easily. Thus Job says, God reckoned him for his enemy, Job xiii. 24: not that he thought God judged him to be his enemy indeed; on the contrary, he was resolved to maintain his way, as to the main of it, before the Lord, ver. 15; and says expressly, chap. x. 7. 'Thou knowest that I am not wicked; but his meaning is, that God treated him as if he had been an enemy; and Elihu found fault with him, even for that, chap. xxxiii. 10. *Obf.* 3. This phrase is used of reckoning a thing what it is not indeed considered in its own nature, but yet in effect is; which last bears the ground of the reckoning. Thus he who gives a flattering blessing to his neighbour, hath a curse reckoned to him, Prov. xxvii. 14. The blessing is not in itself a curse; yet it is a curse in effect, as having the same effect as if he had cursed his neighbour: and so, on that ground it is reckoned to the flatterer a curse. V. and lastly, To reckon a thing to a person, is to set it down on his score, to put it on his account, as really his, antecedent to the reckoning; if ill, to answer for it; if good, that he may claim, or have the benefit of it. Examples of the former: Lev. xvii. 4. Blood shall be reckoned to that man; i. e. the guilt of blood shall be put on that man's account, as really his, and he shall answer for it: he hath shed blood, saith the text, and that man shall be cut off. Psal. xli. 8-7ths. Upon me they would reckon, evil to me, i. e. charge it on me as my fact and deed, and make me answer for it. So a curse is reckoned to the flatterer, Prov. xxvii. 14. Thus Shimei says to David, Let not my lord reckon iniquity to me, 2 Sam. xix. 20-19ths; he owns his crime, and do not remember that which thy servant did perversely, *ibid.* but he begs that the king would not put it on his account, and make him answer for it. And thus David describes the blessedness of the justified man, that the Lord will not reckon iniquity to him, Psal. xxxii. 2. i. e. that he will not put his iniquity on his own account, and make him answer for it; the putting it on the Surety, and his answering already for it, being already sustained at God's bar. Examples of the latter: 2 Sam. iv. 2. *Beeroth*: it would have been reckoned upon Benjamin; viz. as truly theirs, to have the benefit of it, for indeed did belong to Benjamin, Josh. xviii. 25; though the Philistines violently possessed it, 1 Sam. xxxi. 7. So it is said of another plot of ground, It would have been reckoned to the Canaanites, Josh. xiii. 3. namely, as really theirs; and therefore it remained to be possessed by Israel, ver. 1. And thus, Num. xviii. 27. Your heave-offerings shall be reckoned to you; i. e. put on your account, as your own offerings, and you to receive the benefit of the same. On the other hand, He that offereth a peace-offering, and eateth of it on the third day, it was not to be reckoned to him, Lev. vii. 18. i. e. put on the account of his service to God. Psal. xl. 18-17ths. I [am] poor and needy, my LORD will reckon to me; i. e. The Father would put the poverty of the Mediator on his account, and reward him for it. And thus the deed of Phinehas was reckoned to him, put on his account of acceptable service, and graciously rewarded, for the sake of the Mediator.

sworn by, but sought of the Lord. It saves the precious soul, and wraps it up in precious promises.

2. It is a most necessary grace; for it is that which brings Christ and the soul together. And without it, it is impossible to please God, Heb. xi. 6.

Thus far of the phrases formed with *Hhafschabb* to reckon. Now, the Scope and design of Moses in the text, is to shew to all, and particularly to the Jews, the way how a sinner is justified before the Lord, namely, by faith in the Messiah without the works of the law. Having given an account, how Abram entertained the promise, viz. that he trusted in Jehovah, he discovers on that occasion, how he became righteous before God, namely, by that trust: that every one may see in him, as in an exemplar, how a sinner is justified in God's sight. That this is the scope of the words, is put beyond question by the apostle, Rom. iv. From what is said, it appears, that, according to the phraseology of the Holy Ghost, and the scope of this passage, the following positions are established. *Pof. I.* The only righteousness wherein a man can stand before the Lord, is the fulfilling of the law, or a conformity to the law, refusing therefrom. For such is the scripture-notion of righteousness in the case of men. *Pof. II.* The sense of this passage is not, That God reckoned Abram's trusting, or believing, for a righteous and worthy action, as he did the fact of Phinehas, Psal. cvi. 31. For it is the righteousness of Abram's person, not the righteousness of an action, of his that is here aimed at. The deed of Phinehas was what could not have missed, by some at least, to have been reckoned a rash and sinful action, if God himself had not declared his approbation of it: but Abram's trusting in Jehovah, was what could never be liable to any such misconstruction, among those who believe Jehovah to be God. But the sense is, His faith was accounted righteousness for his person in the sight of God. *Pof. III.* Faith's being reckoned or accounted for righteousness, which is the phrase of the *Septuagint*, retained by the apostle Paul. Rom. iv. 3. is equivalent to, and of the same sense with, Moses' phrase in the text, viz. faith's being reckoned righteousness. This is clear from what is said on the third and fourth phrases compared, *Pof. IV.* The righteousness of Christ, though righteousness in the strictest propriety, greatest reality and perfection, antecedently to the imputation or reckoning of it, may, according to the scripture, be imputed for righteousness to us: for, in the phraseology of the Holy Ghost, a thing is said to be reckoned or imputed for what it is really, as well as for what it is not; as appears from the instances adduced, *obj. 1.* on the fourth phrase. *Pof. V.* Since faith, or the act of believing, is not in itself righteousness for a person, before God, antecedently to the imputation of it, for that righteousness: which is manifest from that it doth not, in itself, exactly answer or fulfil the law, the eternal rule of righteousness: and since God, the infallible Judge, whose judgment is always according to truth, is the party imputing it for righteousness: therefore faith, or the act of believing, imputed to sinners for righteousness, neither is at any time, nor is made by the imputation, nor by any gratuitous acceptance, the very formal righteousness for which a sinner is justified in the sight of GOD, It is no more so than Laban's daughters were really strangers to him, Gen. xxxi. 15;

3. It is of perpetual use while here ; it is an eye, hand, and foot to the soul, Psal. xxvii. 3 ; and at death it does the last office to the man, supports him when all other comforts fail, Heb. xi. 13.

4. *Lastly*, Seek faith, to have it wrought, actuated, and strengthened in you ; and for that cause, diligently attend ordinances, the preaching of the word particularly ; for ‘ faith cometh by hearing,’ Rom. x. 17.

or Zion’s sons earthen pitchers, Lam. iv. 2 ; or the nations really less than emptiness, Isa. xl. 17 ; though they were so reckoned. *Pof. VI.* Upon the same grounds, faith is therefore said to be imputed for righteousness ; not that God judgeth it to be the righteousness of a person before him, but because he treats faith as if it were that righteousness ; namely, justifying the person who hath it, pardoning all his sins, and accepting him as righteous in his sight, immediately upon his act of believing. Even as the leviathan treats iron as straw, Job xli. 24. though he does not judge it to be, straw ; and Laban treated his own daughters, Gen. xxxi. 15 ; and Job’s servants their master, Job xix. 15 ; as if they had been strangers ; and Zion’s enemies, her sons as earthen pitchers, Lam. iv. 2 ; though surely they did not judge them to be so. And even as God treats the nations as if they were less than emptiness : Isa. xl. 17. though he infallibly knows they are more than emptiness : and as Job thought himself treated of God, as if he had been his enemy, Job xiii. 24 ; while in the mean time he knew, that God did not judge him to be an enemy to him. *Pof. VII.* Though faith is not really and in itself the righteousness of a guilty man before the Lord : yet being so in effect, to wit, relatively and instrumentally ; for as much as it lays hold on, presents, and pleads the righteousness of Christ, it is on good grounds, said to be imputed for righteousness ; even as the flatterer’s blessing is reckoned a curse, Prov. xxvii. 14 ; as being so in effect. *Pof. VIII.* and last. The righteousness which is the relative and object of faith, viz. the righteousness of Christ, is reckoned or imputed to believers, as really theirs, as well as their faith ; theirs, I say, antecedently to the imputation of it at God’s bar ; though the former is not indeed inherent in them, as the latter is. This is evident from the true sense of the fifth phrase, reckoning a thing to a person, established by the instances of it above adduced. Christ’s righteousness becomes ours, by faith uniting us to him : from which union immediately results a communion with him in his righteousness ; which being legally found at the bar of heaven, that perfect righteousness is reckoned or imputed to us, set down on our score, put on our account, as really ours : even as the guilt of blood is reckoned to the man, Lev. xvii. 4 ; as really his guilt ; and as the plot of ground, Josh. xiii. 3 ; was reckoned to the Canaanites, as really theirs, or belonging to them, &c. And thereupon we are justified on the account of that righteousness truly being and reckoned to be ours.



## OF REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE.

ACTS xi. 18.—*Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.*

**R**EPENTANCE is an inseparable companion of faith, so that the soul blessed with faith in Christ will be also endowed with repentance towards God.

This is a conclusion drawn by the believing Jews from the account Peter had given them of what passed with respect to his receiving the Gentiles into Christian fellowship, with which they rest satisfied, namely, *That God had given repentance to the Gentiles.* Where consider,

1. A blessing granted; *repentance unto life*; so called, to distinguish it from legal repentance, and the sorrow that is unto death. This true repentance is unto life; for, by God's appointment, it must go before eternal life; and who-so have it shall be sure of that.

2. The parties to whom it was granted; *the Gentiles*, those who were once without hope and without God in the world.

3. The author of it, *God*. It is his gift, as well as faith is. He works it in the heart.

The doctrine of the text is,

Doct. 'To those whom God designs for life, he gives repentance unto life. They come all through this strait gate who enter into life.' Or, 'Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience.'

Here I shall shew,

- I. What are the kinds of repentance.
- II. The general nature of repentance unto life.
- III. Who is the author of this repentance.

IV. The springs of it.

V. The parts thereof.

VI. Deduce an inference or two for application.

I. I am to shew, what are the kinds of repentance. They are two.

1. Legal repentance, such as was in Judas, and may be in other reprobates, and so is not saving, Matth. xxvii. 3. being produced by law terrors, without gospel-grace changing the heart.

2. Evangelical repentance, peculiar to the elect, which is that in the text, and is the only true and saving repentance, of which we speak. The general difference betwixt them lies here, that in this last, one repents of his sin as it is sin, or offensive to God, as David did, Psal. li. 4. saying, 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight;' in the other, only as it brings wrath on him, Gen. iv. 13.

II. I proceed to shew, the general nature of repentance unto life. It is a saving grace, 2 Tim. iii. 25. disposing the soul unto all the acts of turning from sin unto God.

1. It is not a transient action, a sigh for sin, a pang of sorrow for it, which goes away again; but it is an abiding grace, a new frame and disposition, fixed in the heart, disposing one to turn from sin to God on all occasions, Zech. xii. 10. 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.'

2. Nor yet a passing work of the first days of one's religion; but a grace in the heart, setting one to an answerable working all their days. The heart being smitten with repentance at conversion, the wound is never bound up to bleed no more, till the band of glory be put about it.

3. It is not a common grace, as legal repentance is, but a saving one; distinguishing one from a hypocrite, and having a necessary connection with eternal life.

III. I shall shew, who is the author of this repentance.

1. Not men themselves; it is not owing to one's natural

powers, Jer. xxii. 23. 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.' The stony heart is beyond man's power to remove.

2. It is God's free gift, and wrought by the power of his Spirit in the heart, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them,' Jer. xxxi. 18, 19. 'I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Sometimes notorious sinners become penitents, as Manasseh, Paul, &c. Where he is the matter, the knottiest timber is as easy for the Spirit to work as any other, Zech. xii. 10. forecited.

The means the Spirit makes use of is the word; hence we read of preaching repentance. And (1.) The law serves to break the hard heart, Jer. xxiii. 29. 'Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?' It is like the Baptist preparing the way for the Messiah's coming. Hence it is called 'the Spirit of bondage,' Rom. viii. 15. (2.) The gospel serves to melt the hard heart, like a fire, Jer. xxiii. 29. forecited; and so to bow and bend it from sin unto God. The soul is driven by the law, but drawn by the gospel. The Lord comes in the still small voice.

IV. I proceed to shew, the springs of this repentance. There are two opened in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

1. A true sense of sin. And in this there are two things.

(1.) A sight of it, Psal. li. 3. 'My sin is ever before me.' The man's eyes are opened, and he sees his sinfulness of nature, heart, lip, and life; the evil of his sin, in the misery and danger of it to himself, and the dishonour it does to God.

(1.) A painful feeling of it, Acts ii. 37. The sin which sat light on them before, becomes a burden which they are



not able to bear; for now they are roused out of their lethargy and feels their sores: it is a burden on their spirits, backs, and heads. They are filled with terror, anguish, and remorse, at the sight, as was the Philippian jailor, Acts xvi. 30. This is necessary for repentance, because otherwise the sinner will never part with his sin, nor prize Christ and his grace, Rev. iii. 17. He will reign as king without Christ, till he feel his lost estate, as did the prodigal, Luke xv.

2. An apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, Joel ii. 12, 13. 'Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rent your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.' The eye of faith is opened to see and believe, that there is forgiveness and mercy with him to a poor sinner, that though the sinner has destroyed himself, yet in God is his help; there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. This can only be apprehended aright through Jesus Christ, Zech. xii. 10. forecited. Not mercy for mercy's sake, but Christ's sake: 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, &c. This is necessary. For without it, one will either, (1.) Go on in secret despair, casting off the thoughts of his case, and making the best of it he can, Jer. ii. 25. 'Thou saidst There is no hope. No: for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.' Or, (2.) Lie down in tormenting despair, like Judas. Both which will fix sin in the heart, and bar out repentance. And since God is a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity, and without satisfaction there can be no remission, there is no apprehending of mercy but through Christ.

V. I proceed to shew, the parts of repentance. These are two, humiliation and conversion, Joel ii. 12, 13. above quoted.

1. Humiliation. The sinner goes from God by the highway of pride and self-conceit; but always comes back the low way of humiliation. Grace pulls him down from the seat of the scorner, and lays him at the Lord's feet, 1 Pet. v. 6. 'Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.' It makes him like Benhadad's servants, who came to the king of Israel girded with

sackcloth, and ropes on their heads, in the most humiliating posture. In it there is,

(1.) Sorrow for sin, a kindly sorrow for the offence and dishonour done to a holy gracious God, Zech. xii. 10. formerly cited, defacing his image, transgressing his law, grieving his Spirit, and furnishing spear and nails to pierce a Saviour.

(2.) Shame, a holy shame for sin, Rom. vi. 21. ‘What fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?’ They see now their spiritual nakedness, pollution, disappointed expectations from sin, and reproach discovered, which fill the soul with blushing.

(3.) Self-loathing, Ezek. xxxvi. 31. ‘Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations.’ They see a fulness of sin in them, and the complicated aggravations of their sin, which make them to smite on their breast, as the publican did, Luke xviii. 13. as deserving to be pierced through the heart it bred in; to smite on the thigh, as Ephraim did, Jer. xxxi. 19. as if he desired to break the legs that carried him out of God’s way.

(4.) Penitent confession, Jer. iii. 13. accusing and condemning themselves.

2. Conversion, or returning. Of which there are two parts.

1st. Turning away from sin, 2 Tim. ii. 19. To repent of sin, and continue in the habitual practice of it, is a contradiction. They turn from it,

(1.) In heart, by a hearty and sincere hatred of it. Psal. cxix. 104. ‘I hate every false way.’ They hate it as an evil, the worst of evils, worse than sufferings. They hate it sincerely as sin, universally and irreconcilably. They look on it as God does, as that abominable thing which he hates.

(3.) In their life and conversation; they get clean hands.

[1.] They turn from the gross pollutions of the outward man, in the habitual practice of these, Psal. xxiv. 3, 4. ‘Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.’ A profane life is the mark of an impenitent state, Gal. v. 21. ‘They which do such things shall

not inherit the kingdom of God.' The true godly may make gross slips; but if they be habitually gross in their lives, there is no difference betwixt Christ's sheep and the devil's goats. [2.] They are tender with respect to sins of common infirmity, making conscience of words and action, as Paul did, Acts xxiv. 16. 'Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.' What others count light, they will count great: even these as burdens to them, which they groan under, and as iron fetters they would fain be freed of, Rom. vii. 24. 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

*2dly*, Turning to God. By faith man returns to God as a portion, by repentance as a Lord and Master, like a runaway servant. And he returns,

(1.) To God himself. Sinners departing from God, dislike not only their service, but their Master, Luke xix. 14. But returning they are disposed to love him and like him as a Master.

(2.) To his duty to God, Acts ix. 6. to the practice of every known duty, and spirituality in duty. This is new obedience, which a penitent turns to, [1.] In full purpose, Psal. cxix. 106. no more doubting whether to fall in with it or not, or delaying or putting it off any more. [2.] In sincere endeavours, Acts xxiv. 6. \*

*Inf.* 1. An impenitent heart is a sad sign of a lost state, Rom. ii. 5. While thou livest so, thou art far from God; and if thou die so, thou art lost for ever.

2. That repentance which is not evangelical and true, is little worth. You must have more than Judah's repentance, if ever you see heaven.

3. To pretend to repentance, and never forsake sin, is vain.

4. To leave sin, and not take up the contrary duties, is not repentance.

5. Go to the Lord by faith for the grace of repentance.

\* A large and particular account of the nature, author, necessity, &c. of repentance, may be seen in several discourses in a volume of the author's sermons, first published in 1756, which were preached only two or three years before he delivered this discourse; which may partly account for the brevity of it.



## OF CHRIST'S ORDINANCES IN GENERAL.

ISA. xii. 3.—*Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.*

**T**HIS song looks to the days of the gospel, wherein Christ having come and purchased salvation, the tidings of it are carried through the world in the gospel, and it is communicated to Jews and Gentiles through the means of grace. Here we have,

1. A benefit to be had in the church, *water*, i. e. gospel grace, the benefits of Christ's redemption, as suitable to needy, fainting souls, as water to the thirsty. See John iv. 14. and vii. 37.

2. The way of its communication to poor sinners. It is to be *drawn out of the wells of salvation*. These are gospel-ordinances, the wells in this valley of Baca for the life of souls, and refreshment of spiritual travellers. All the elect capable to draw, do draw out of them. This is the sense, whether the allusion be to the wells in the wilderness for the Israelites, or to the Jews fetching water out of the spring of Siloam at the feast of tabernacles in the night, with mirth and music, to the temple, and pouring it on the altar.

The text furnishes this doctrine.

DOCT. 'The Lord's ordinances are the wells of salvation to the elect.' Or, 'The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are, his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.'

Here I shall shew,

- I. What is understood by a means of salvation.
- II. What are these means of salvation.
- III. What makes any ordinance a mean of grace.
- IV. To whom are the Lord's ordinances made effectual.
- V. Whence their efficacy proceeds.
- VI. Deduce an inference or two.

I. I am to shew, what is understood by a means of salvation. It is that by and through which the Lord Jesus doth by his Spirit convey grace and salvation into a soul. That is a mean or mids betwixt the Lord and the soul, which he uses for communication of grace from himself to the soul, 1 Cor. i. 21. 'For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' Chap. iii. 5. 'Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?' The which may be used with expectation of good thereby. These means are some of them outward, some inward; some ordinary, others extraordinary.

II. I come now to shew, what these means of salvation are.

1. The inward means is faith, Heb. iv. 2. 'Unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.' This ordinarily requires an outward means to work it by. But being wrought, it is the great inward means of communication betwixt Christ and the soul. This is the mean of entering us into the covenant, of repentance, justification, reconciliation, sanctification, &c. It is the bucket whereby one draws the water out of the wells of salvation; and the want of it in most that come to them, makes them go away without water.

2. Extraordinary means are whatsoever the Lord in his sovereign wisdom is pleased to make use of extraordinarily for conveying grace into the hearts of his elect, as he did a voice from heaven for the conversion of Paul, Acts ix. iv. 5. None can limit sovereignty. He may use what means he will, and bring about his purposes of grace by means unknown to us. What means the Lord makes use of in the case of elect idiots, such as are deaf or blind, and so incapable of reading or hearing the word, and yet may get grace and be saved, who can determine? Or perhaps he does it without means altogether. But,

3. The outward and ordinary means are the Lord's own ordinances, Rom. x. 14, 15. 'How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall

they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! They are called outward, because they are something without ourselves; ordinary, because though ordinarily the Lord makes use of them for these holy ends, yet he has not tied himself to them, but may work without them, as seems good in his sight, Acts ix. 4, 5. Now these are,

1st, In the general, all the ordinances of God without exception, which he has set up in his church for that end, namely, the word, sacraments, prayer, church-communion or fellowship, Acts ii. 42; which being managed by mutual instruction, admonition, consolation, and watching over one another, are of great use to promote the salvation of souls; church-government, discipline, and censures, Matth. xviii. 17; religious fasting, 1 Cor. vii. 5; singing of psalms, Eph. v. 19; swearing by the name of God, when duly called thereto, Deut, vi. 13; and whatsoever are God's institutions in his church.

2dly, The most special means of grace and salvation are the first three, the word, sacraments, and prayer, Acts ii. 42.

(1.) The word preached or read. This has been a well of salvation to many, and a means of grace, Acts ii. 41. About three thousand souls together drank of this well, and lived. It is the seed which the new creature is formed of; and though a despised ordinance, yet the great means of God's appointment for bringing sinners into a state of grace, 1 Cor. i. 21. forecited.

(2.) The sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper. In both, the people of God have drank to the salvation of their souls, though they are not converting ordinances, but sealing ones, supposing the efficacy of the word to precede; as is evident in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts viii. 39. 1 Cor. x. 16.

(3.) Prayer, public, private, and secret. This is a very special means of grace, and a most ordinary way of communion betwixt Christ and a soul. So that one no sooner grows concerned about his soul, but he uses this means, as Saul did, of whom it is said, Acts ix. 11. 'Behold, he prayeth.' It is a means by which divine influences have flowed plenti-



fully to many a soul, and none of the Lord's people can live without it.

III. I shall now shew, what makes any ordinance a mean of grace, a well of salvation, out of which one may in faith look to draw water for his soul, or get spiritual good by. The Papists and church of England think human institution sufficient, else they had never made so many significant ceremonies and actions in religion, for which there is no divine warrant, as crossing in baptism, kissing of the book in swearing, &c. In the use of which they think one has ground to expect good to one's soul; but all these, being but human ordinances and inventions of men, are not means of grace, but of sinning; not wells of salvation, but broken cisterns, that can hold no water; nay, they are rather puddles, that defile the soul, instead of nourishing it. For,

1. No ordinance whatsoever can avail without a particular blessing; for the efficacy of ordinances is not natural, or from themselves. Now, men cannot annex a blessing to their ordinances and institutions, to make them effectual for the good of souls, though both church and state join for it. And we have no ground to expect the Spirit's working with tools that are not of his own making. Therefore their institution is vain, and their use too, Matth. xv. 9. 'In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.'

2. Men's institutions or ordinances, in respect of God, are forbidden and condemned by the Lord's word, namely, in the second commandment. The want of a divine warrant is sufficient to condemn any thing of this sort, if it be never so likely in the eyes of human wisdom, Matth. xv. 9. just quoted. See Jer. xxxii. 35. 'And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass thro' the fire unto Molech, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.' And they must needs be blasted institutions, since the institution is an invading of Christ's royal prerogative, Matth. xxviii. 20; who has directed his servants to teach his people to 'observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded.'

3. Men's use of them is not only useless, but worse, not

only to no good purpose, but to ill purpose; for the using of them is will-worship, which is sinning against the Lord, Col. ii. 20—23. ‘Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not, taste not, handle not: which all are to perish with the using), after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship and humility, and neglecting of the body, not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.’ It provokes God, and brings on wrath on the users of them, Hos. v. 11, 12. ‘Ephraim is oppressed, and broken in judgment; because he willingly walked after the commandment. Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth: and to the house of Judah as rottenness.’

That which makes any ordinance a means of grace or salvation, what one may justly look for good of to his soul, is divine institution only, Matth. xxviii. 20. forecited: therefore the first question in all ordinances ought to be, ‘Whose is this image and superscription?’ That appointment is to be found in the Lord’s word, Isa. viii. 20. ‘To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’ That is ‘sufficient to make the man of God perfect,’ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17; and therefore contains the whole ordinances he is to meddle with for the salvation of himself or others. The institution of some ordinances is more clear in the word than others; but whatever ordinance has divine warrant, express or by good consequence, is a divine ordinance and means of grace. And to these his own ordinances the Lord has confined us, Deut. iv. 2. ‘Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.’

IV. I proceed to consider, to whom the Lord’s ordinances made effectual.

1. Not to all who partake of them, Is. liii. 1. ‘Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?’ Many come to these wells who never taste of the water. I think it an unwarrantable expression, that all God’s ordinances do attain their end, in the salvation or damnation of all that come under them; for damnation is not

the end of any of God's ordinances, but salvation. And the scriptures adduced to prove it, viz. Isa. lv. 10, 11. 'For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it;' 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. 'For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life: and who is sufficient for these things?' will not prove it; for the former respects only God's end in sending his word, the other the event, but neither of them the end of the ordinance. Damnation is the effect or consequence of the contempt or misimprovement of ordinances, but by no means the end thereof.

2. But to all the elect they are effectual, unto whom they come Acts xiii. 48. 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' John x. 26. 'Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.' To the elect only they are effectual for their salvation, which is their end.

V. I am to shew, whence the efficacy of ordinances proceeds. It does not proceed from any virtue in themselves, or in him that administers them, but from the Spirit of the Lord working in them and by them, 1 Cor iii. 7. But this I shall speak to more largely in a posterior discourse.

I conclude with a few inferences.

*Inf.* 1. Sad is the case of those who are in such a wilderness, as there are no wells in, nor any of God's ordinances. 'Where no vision is, the people perish.' This is the dismal case of the Pagan world. Which should move us to pray that the Lord may send the light of the gospel to these dark places of the earth.

2. The filling up of the wells in a land, by removing ordinances from a people, is a sad stroke. Where the word and sacraments are not, there is no church there; and consequently God has no people to save there. O let us cry to the Lord, that this may never be our unhappy case,



3. The defiling of the wells is a sad matter for those who drink of them, whether it be by error in doctrine, superstition in worship, or uninstituted government of the church: but worst of all, where they are poisoned with damnable heresies and idolatry, as in the apostate church of Rome. Let us pray for, and strive to maintain, purity of doctrine. worship, and government.

4. Heinous is the sin of the neglect or contempt of the wells of salvation, which God has opened unto them. Let despisers and neglecters of ordinances consider this, and what they will answer when God rises up to call them to an account. Alas! this is one of the great grounds of the Lord's controversy with the present generation, which loudly calls to deep humiliation before him.

5. Great is the sin and loss of those who come to the wells, but never draw of the water nor taste it: who are never bettered by ordinances, but remain as dead and unconcerned about their souls as if the means of salvation were not vouchsafed to them.

6. *Lastly*, Prize the ordinances. Prepare for them, and duly improve them; remember they are the ordinary means of salvation: therefore seek to enjoy God, and to have communion with him, in them, otherwise they will be in vain as to you.



#### HOW THE WORD IS MADE EFFECTUAL TO SALVATION.

EPH. vi. 17.—*The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

**I**N these words we have, (1.) A particular piece of the Christian armour recommended, *the word of God*, the revelation of his mind communicated to us in the scriptures, with which every one who minds for heaven should be familiarly acquainted. (2.) A particular piece of its commendation; it is *the sword of the Spirit*; i. e. it is that which the Spirit of the Lord uses in fighting the battles of the Lord, and conquering an elect world to Christ, and bringing them,

through all opposition from the devil, the world, and the flesh, into the heavenly Canaan. And therefore it cannot but be of singular use to a Christian in the spiritual warfare. It is but the sword, but the Spirit cuts with it.

The doctrine of the text is,

DOCT. 'The word of God is the sword the Spirit makes use of for raising up a kingdom to Christ.' This more fully in the words of the Catechism, runs thus: 'The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation.'

In handling this subject, I shall shew,

I. In what respects the word is an ordinance of God, and mean of salvation.

II. What are the ends for which the Lord has appointed these means and ordinances of reading and preaching the word.

III. Consider the efficacy of the word.

IV. Improve the subject in some inferences.

I. I am to shew, in what respects the word is an ordinance of God and mean of salvation.

*First,* The reading of the word is an ordinance of God, and mean of salvation, of God's own appointment. The Bible is this word, and God has given it to us, and appointed it to be read.

1. The public reading of it in the congregation is God's ordinance, and a mean of salvation. And we find it in scripture performed by the teachers of the people, Neh. viii. 8; 'So they read in the book, in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.' Ver. 2, 3. 'And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the 7th month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water-gate, from the morning until mid-day, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.' And so the reading of the word claims a

place among public ordinances. Hence reading and expounding a passage of scripture every Lord's day in the church, is a laudable and well-warranted practice in this church.

2. The private reading of it in families, Deut. vi. 6, 7, 8, 9; 'These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates,' Psal. lxxviii. 5; 'For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children.' Every family ought to be a church; and as they are to speak to God by prayer, so they are to hear God speak to them, by reading of his word. And this they ought to do every morning and evening, as well as command their children and servants to read it by themselves.

3. Secret reading of it by one's self, Deut. xvii. 19; 'It [the law or word of God] shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life,' John v. 39; 'Search the scriptures.' By this means the soul converses with God in his word. And those who do not make a practice of daily reading the scripture, are none of the Lord's people, whatever otherwise they may profess.

Hence it is evident, that the people not only may, but ought to read the Bible, and therefore it ought to be translated into the vulgar languages. Which highly condemns the Antichristian church of Rome, which takes away the key of knowledge from the people, by prohibiting them to read the word of God.

*Secondly*, The preaching of the word is an ordinance of God, and mean of grace, 1 Cor. i. 21; 'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' But though all may read the word, yet none ought to preach it, but those who, being qualified for it, are duly called thereto, 2 Cor. iii. 6; 'Who hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit, Rom. x. 15; 'How shall they preach except they be sent?' 1 Tim.



iv. 14; 'Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.' Though the reading of the word, as well as the preaching, is a mean of salvation, yet the preaching of it is the special means, though a despised ordinance in the world; therefore called *foolishness*, 1 Cor. i. 21; It is the most ancient of the two. Noah was a preacher, before the Bible was to take his text from, 2 Pet. ii. 5; And so was Enoch before him, Jude 14; In this work Christ himself spent the time of his making public appearance in the world, viz. preaching the kingdom of God. It is the mercy of the church of God, that they have the word of God as a lamp always burning: but the preaching of it is the snuffing of the lamp, by which it gives the greater light. And for this reason the preaching of the word should be attended on by all, if ever they expect to be saved.

II. I proceed to shew what are the ends for which the Lord has appointed these means and ordinances of reading and preaching the word.

*First*, For sinners out of Christ they are appointed means of two great and necessary purposes.

1. Of their conviction, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. 'But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.' The sinner naturally is asleep in sin, and the word awakens him; he is bold and daring, and will not consider his sin, nor duty either; but the word brings him, to the bar, judges him, convicts him, and condemns him. And,

(1.) It discovers his sin to him. [1.] What are his sins. It comes home so close to him, as if it said, 'Thou art the man.' It goes out through and in through him, and opens up his very heart, tells him of himself what none in the world were privy to, but only God and his own conscience, 1 Cor. iv. 25; This is what the spouse means by 'the watchmen's finding her,' Cant. iii. 3; Who has told the minister, say many, when the minister drawing his bow at a venture knows not whom it hits, till the party touched cries out, but the minister directs the arrow, Heb. iv. 12. And many a time

have we seen the reproof laid in seasonably for the sin, that one could not miss it, if but going on straight in the ordinary.

[2.] What the heinous nature of his sin is, Heb. iv. 12; God's word pulls off the paint and varnishing from the man's sin, and discovers it in its loathsome nature, and killing aggravations. It makes him see the evil in it, that he never saw before, Acts xxvi. 18.

(2.) It discovers his misery out of Christ, Acts ii. 37; The sinner sees in the word, as in a glass, his lost state without a Saviour; perceives himself bound over to death with cords of guilt, which fills him with fear, terror, anxiety, and remorse.

2. Of their conversion, Psal. xix. 7; 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' The word is the means which God hath chosen for bringing sinners to himself, Acts xxvi. 18; for raising the dead soul to life, for regeneration, and the working of faith and repentance. This effect of the word we take up in these two particulars.

(1.) The word is the mean of driving the sinner out of himself to Jesus Christ by faith, as it did Peter's hearers, Acts ii. 37, 38; 'Faith cometh by hearing.' The law goes before and condemns the sinner, and discovers him a lost man. The gospel follows with the glad tidings of salvation, and the soul is persuaded to embrace them.

(2.) It is the mean of driving the sinner out of his sins unto God, Acts xx. 21; It sets fire to his nest in sin, and brings him to the Lord as a Master, and to a compliance with his will as his duty.

*Secondly*, For saints they are means appointed for their edification or building up, Acts xx. 32; The church of Christ in this world is but a building, and not yet finished; and every particular saint's state in this world is but an unfinished building: and therefore they must have the word continued with them, as the scaffolding is with the house till it get on the topstone, Eph. iv. 11,—13; And the reading and preaching of the word are,

1. Means of building them up in holiness, the foundation of which is laid in them at conversion, Acts xx. 32; As they are born again of the incorruptible seed of the word, so they are nourished by these breasts; by the same means they had

their spiritual life, they get it more abundantly, 1 Pet. ii. 2; It does so by,

(1.) Establishing them in the good they have attained, setting them to hold it fast over the belly of temptations, Eph. iv. 14; By the reading and preaching of the word, the truth according to godliness is rivetted in them, that the longer they live under the means, they are more confirmed in the Lord's way.

(2.) Cleansing them from remaining evils in their heart and life, Psal. xix. 9; Coming to this glass, they get their spots discovered to them, that they may wipe them off. So the word is the pruning-hook of the great Husbandman, John xv. 2, 3; and the engine for demolishing the remaining strong holds of the rebels, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

(3.) Pressing and helping them forward to the good thing lacking, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17; and so the effect is, that they 'all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord,' 2 Cor. iii. 18; It helps them still to add a cubit to their stature, shewing them more of the truth and the duties of holiness.

2. A means of building them up in comfort, Rom. xv. 4; They are liable to many griefs in the world; but it is appointed to be their great cordial, and sovereign remedy against all their griefs. And this it does, (1.) By setting their case in a true light, Psal. lxxiii. 17; (2.) By affording suitable remedies for their case, from the precious promises and doctrines of it suited to every case, Isa. xl. 1, 2; 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.'

III. I shall consider the efficacy of the word. Concerning which observe,

1. The parties to whom it is effectual. Its convincing efficacy it may have on the reprobate, as Felix, Acts xxiv. 25; Its converting efficacy it has on the elect only, Acts xiii. 48; 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' Its edifying efficacy, both in holiness and comfort, it has on the saints.

2. The spring of its efficacy is not from itself, nor the



preacher, but from the Spirit's operation by and with it, 1 Cor. iii. 5, 6; 'Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered: but God gave the increase.

3. The inward mean which the Spirit makes use of to render it efficacious, is the faith or belief of it, resting upon God's faithful word for the efficacy, Heb. iv. 2.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

*Inf.* 1. Prize your Bibles, and read them diligently in your families, and by yourselves, and look on that exercise as a mean appointed of God for your souls good, John v. 39; 'Search the scriptures.' Alas! the dust of many people's Bibles will be a heavy witness against them at the great day: which should excite us all to the careful perusal of them.

2. Prize the preaching of the word, and attend it conscientiously; and remember that the neglecting and deserting it is not such a light thing as many look on it to be; since it is the spiritual means which the Lord makes use of in converting sinners, and edifying saints; and is necessarily productive of the most terrible consequences to those who contemn it.

3. Let not the one jumble out the other. God has joined them; do not ye then put them asunder. Think not that because ye hear the preaching, therefore ye may neglect reading the Bible; nor to sit at home without necessity on the Lord's day, thinking to do as well with your Bibles, as attending the dispensation of the word. For as the preaching sends you to your Bible, your Bible would send you to the preaching, if ye would hearken to it, 1 Cor. i. 21; And the Bible is read in vain, if it do not inspire you with a sincere love to the preaching of the word.

4. The word is necessary for saints as well as sinners. It is false growth by which people grow beyond it, either in preaching or reading, before they get to heaven. Nay, all such growth and progress is an arrant delusion.

5. *Lastly*, Look to the Lord himself for the efficacy of the word; and labour to believe the word, that it may profit your souls. For without faith the word will be unprofitable to you; and without the influence of the Spirit, ye will reap no benefit by it.

HOW THE WORD IS TO BE READ AND HEARD.

LUKE viii. 18.—*Take heed therefore how ye hear.*

**T**HIS is an admonition inferred by our Lord from the parable of the sower in the preceding part of the chapter, in which he had shewn the very different events of people's hearing the word. To some it is effectual, to more it is not: *Take heed therefore how ye hear*, says he. Much depends on the right manner of hearing the word; and the case is the same as to the reading of it, for therein we are to hear God speak by his word. Men may hear what is very good, yet get no good by it, unless they hear in the due manner.

The doctrine of the text is,

DOCT. 'As the hearers of the word would profit by it, they should take heed how they hear it.'

Here I shall consider that one point, How we should hear? or 'How the word is to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation?' *Ans.* 'That the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer; receive it with faith and love; lay it up in our hearts; and practise it in our lives.'

There are three things necessary to be heeded and practised, if we would so manage these ordinances, as they may become effectual for our salvation.

- I. Some things are to go before hearing.
- II. Some things are to go along with it.
- III. Some things are to follow after it.

I. Some things are to go before hearing; namely, preparation and prayer.

*First, Preparation.* We should prepare ourselves for the ordinances, as Jacob said, Gen. xxxv. 2, 3. 'Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change

your garments. And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.' It is true, God may by his sovereign grace catch the unprepared heart by his word, as he says, Isa. lxv. 1. 'I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not.' and there are not wanting instances of such a surprising dispensation of grace. But it is the way of preparation in which we have ground to look for good by it, Isa. lxiv. 5. 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways; otherwise we are not in the way of getting good by it.'

This preparation lies in these five things.

1. Getting the heart impressed with an awful sense of the majesty and holiness of that God into whose presence we are going, and whose word we are to hear, Psal. lxxxix. 6. Though the voice is on earth, the speaker is in heaven, and we should consider it so as to come to hear what God says to us, Acts x. 33. And the more this be on our spirits, we may expect the more good by the word, Isa. lxvi. 2.

2. Banishing out of the heart worldly cares that are lawful at other times, Matth. xiii. 7. We should say to all these as Abraham did to his young men, 'Abide ye here—, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship,' Gen. xxii. 5. The heart going after the world at such a time, renders the word ineffectual: but a contrary disposition is a token for good.

3. Application of the blood of Christ to the soul for removing of guilt, and doing away any controversy betwixt God and the soul, Amos iii. 3. 'How can two walk together, except they be agreed?' Psal. xxvi. 6. 'I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.' The laver stood before the entrance into the temple, that they might wash there who were to go in: So spiritually, 'before the throne there is a sea of glass like unto crystal,' in which filthy polluted souls are to wash, ere they be admitted to the throne, Rev. iv. 6. And happy they who come thus washed to hear the word; for they may expect to hold communion with Christ therein.

4. Purging the heart of carnal and corrupt lusts and affections, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. This is to put off one's shoes when coming on the holy ground, laying by the earthly frame, and putting on a heavenly one. For what good effect can be ex-



pected on the heart, filled with corrupt lusts, passions, and prejudices, nourished and not striven against; Surely none at all. Whereas, if the heart be purged from these, the happiest effects may be looked for. It is impossible to profit by the word, where the heart is full of vain and carnal thoughts and projects.

5. *Lastly*, Stirring up in the heart spiritual desires, 1 Pet. ii. 2. 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby,' longing for communion with God, seeing his glory in the sanctuary, the supply of soul wants, and particularly for something suitable to our case. And therefore a deep consideration of our own case is a necessary part of preparation, 1 Kings viii. 38. and, if properly attended to, would be attended with great blessings.

This preparation for the ordinances is necessary, considering two things especially. (1.) The greatness of him with whom we have to do, Heb. xii. 28, 29. 'Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire. One would not rush without consideration into the presence of his prince: why then should one rush thoughtlessly into the presence of his God?' (2.) The weight of the work. To hear God's mind declared to us is a business of the greatest importance; eternity depends on it to us; life and death hang upon our improving or not improving it, 2 Cor. ii. 16. 'To the one (says the apostle) we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.' And were this duly considered, it would stir us all up to the most diligent preparation.

*Secondly*, Prayer. We should be much in prayer before we go to ordinances, family prayer, and secret prayer, and therefore ought not to spend the Lord's day morning so as not to have time for these. If ye would have good of the word read or preached, pray, and pray earnestly, before it. Pray,

1. For assistance to the minister. Hence the apostle says, 'Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified,' 2 Thess. iii. 1. Pray that the Lord himself would come out with him, directing him, instructing him, and exciting him, what to speak, and how to speak. It is rare to see a lively people under a dead mini-

stry; and therefore people's own interest should engage them in concern for ministers.

2. For a meal to yourselves, Psal. cxix. 18. 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law.' Pray that God would direct the word to your case, and send it home on your hearts with his blessing, that ye may be enlightened, sanctified, strengthened, humbled, or raised up by it, as your case requires. And in order to attain this, pray and wrestle earnestly,

3. For an outpouring of the Spirit in his own ordinances, agreeably to the Lord's own promises, Prov. i. 23. 'Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you; that yourselves and others may be bettered by the word. Every one should be concerned for the success of the gospel, not to themselves only, but to others also. Love to God and our neighbours souls should engage to this, 2 Thess. iii. 1. above cited.

Now, both this preparation and prayer beforehand being done, beware ye lean not on them, but remember that all depends on the Spirit's influences, and that he is debtor to none, Cant. iv. 16. 'Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.' John iii. 8. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth.' Cry therefore that the Spirit may render the word effectual.

## II. Some things are to go along with hearing.

*First*, Attending unto the word diligently. This implies,

1. Waiting diligently upon the ordinances, so as people make it their business to catch opportunities of the word, and let none slip which Providence will allow them to overtake. That they hang on about the Lord's hands in the galleries of ordinances, labouring to keep the tryst which God makes with sinners there, 1 Tim. iv. 13. They that are only chance-customers to ordinances, whose attendance is ruled by their own conveniences, without conscience of duty, causing them to take them only now and then as their fancy takes them, cannot expect good of them. 'Blessed is the man (says the personal Wisdom of God) that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors,' Prov. viii. 34.

2. Diligent attention to the word, Isa. lv. 2. 'Hearken diligently unto me;' listening carefully to it, as a matter of

the greatest weight, keeping the mind off other things in the time, and bending it wholly unto the word. In this there are these four things comprehended.

(1.) Outward gravity and composure, without which attention is marred, Luke iv. 20. If men do believe it to be God's word which they are hearing, this is as little respect to it, as they can shew, namely, outward gravity; and therefore they are not to lay down their heads and sleep, nor to gaze hither and thither, far less to laugh, or to go out and in, here and there, in the time. This kind of behaviour is not without contempt of God, who speaks to men by his word.

(2.) A fixing and bending of the ear and mind to what is spoken. Hence is that counsel of the wise man, Prov. ii. 1, 2. 'My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding.'—People must take care that they be not wandering in their heart while the Lord's words sound before them. If the heart wander, and be thinking on other things, how can the word do them good, while Satan has thus stolen away the heart?

(3.) A discerning of what they hear, so as to distinguish betwixt truth and error, the corn and the chaff, Mark iv. 24. 'Take heed what ye hear:' and therefore to mark always the agreement betwixt what is preached and the written word, for which the Bereans are highly commended, Acts xvii. 11. For they attend not rightly to the word who do not thus endeavour to discern what they hear.

(4.) An endeavouring to know the mind of God in his word, to hear with understanding. This is to attend not only to the words, but to the things wrapt up in these words; as Lydia did, 'whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul,' Acts xvi. 14. It is not enough to hear the words, but the message from the Lord is to be weighed and seriously considered, and the mind of God taken up therein.

There is great need of attending unto the word with diligence, and making serious work of it. For,

(1.) The matter in hand is of the greatest weight; it concerns eternity; it is a treaty of peace betwixt God and our souls; the proposal of a method to preserve our souls from ruin, Luke xvi. 29. 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them;' and this proposal is not to be carelessly



managed. And God himself is the Speaker ; and what he speaks should be diligently attended to, for his sake ; to prevent the breaking out of his wrath, which is threatened against those who do not hearken to him.

(2.) Because at best we will have much ado to hear well as we ought. We are naturally dull of hearing the Lord's word, Isa. lviii. 4, 5. ' They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of the charmer, charming never so wisely.' And oft-times there is a locked door betwixt him and us. Hence he is represented thus, ' Behold, I stand at the door and knock,' &c. Rev. iii. 20. And there is a thick wall of separation also betwixt him and us, Isa. lxix. 2. ' Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.' And there is always much noise about us as long as the tempter is to the fore. Therefore the highest attention is requisite.

3. *Lastly*, If we do not thus attend, we lose, and our loss is great. Thomas missed one occasion of meeting with Christ, and unbelief got in upon him. And that word which we miss may be the most suitable to our case, which therefore Satan watches to carry off from us. Therefore we should never miss one occasion of hearing the word.

*Secondly*, Receiving the word rightly. This lies in two things.

1. Receiving it with faith, Heb. iv. 2. It is the mouth of the soul, by which one receives the sincere milk of the word, and drinks water out of the wells of salvation, and without which one gets no good of it to his salvation ; but it is as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. It must be received,

(1.) With a faith of assent, believing it to be true and right, assenting to the truth and righteousness of the precepts, promises, and threatenings of it, Psal. cxix. 128, 160. ' I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right. Thy word is true from the beginning.' It has a divine authority ; itself is God's testimony, which therefore for itself is to be believed ; and where the power of it comes, it captivates the soul into the belief of it, 2 Cor. x. 5. This is to receive the kingdom of God as a little child, Luke xviii. 17.

(2.) With a faith of application, applying it to ourselves, Job v. ult. ' Hear it, and know thou it for thy good.'

The Lord's word is compared to the falling rain or dew, Deut. xxxii. 2. The soul in receiving it should be as the dry and gaping ground swallowing it up as it falls, Psal. cxliii. 6. 'My soul thirsteth after thee as a thirsty land.' But most people are like the smooth stones, which send it off themselves to those about them. Now, this application is that which makes the plaister stick, and nothing else will do it. If the word be not applied, it can do no more good, than a plaister unapplied can heal the wound.

Now, the word is to be applied by us, for all the ends for which it is appointed, namely, for our conviction, Acts ii. 37. our conversion, John iv. 45. our edification in holiness, 1 Pet. ii. 2. and comfort, Rom. xv. 4. for the informing our judgments, and rectifying our will and affections; in short, for all the purposes of our salvation; otherwise we receive it in vain.

2. Receiving it with love, 2 Thess. ii. 10. Faith receives the word as true, love receives it as good, and good for us, Isa. xxxix. ult. 'Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken,' said Hezekiah to the prophet. It is good for us in all the parts of it, for we need them all; the threatenings as well as the promises; its reproofs as well as its consolations. And there is a threefold love which we owe to the word of God.

(1.) A love of esteem, highly prising it, Job xxiii. 12. 'I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.' Psal. cxix. 72. 'The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.' (2.) A love of desire after it, 1 Pet. ii. 2. 'As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby;' a longing for it. (3.) A love of complacency in it, Psal. cxix. 162. 'I rejoice at thy word as one that findeth great spoil.'

We owe this love to the word for the author's sake, Psal. cxix. 159. 'Consider how I love thy precepts;' for its intrinsic excellency, Psal. cxix. 140. 'Thy word is very pure; therefore doth thy servant love it;' and for the necessity and usefulness of it to us, as 'light that shineth in a dark place,' 2 Pet. 1. 19; as our food, Job xxiii. 12, forecited; nay, as our very life and breath, Deut. xxxii. 47.

*Thirdly*, Laying it up in our hearts. Our hearts and memories are to be storehouses for the word, and there we are to lay it up, as it comes to our hands, Psal. cxix. 11. 'Thy

word have I hid in mine heart, (says the Psalmist), that I might not sin against thee.' How can those expect good of the word who just let it go as it comes? But we should catch hold of it, retain it, and not forget it.

We should lay it up as a precious and enriching treasure, Col. iii. 16. 'Let the word of God dwell in you richly : ' As a thing that we are in hazard of losing, and being robbed of. Matth. xiii. 4; and as what we will have use for afterwards, Isa. xlii. 23. 'Who will hearken and hear for the time to come?' Suppose it reach not your present case, it may be useful for what will be your case. You are travelling through the wilderness: lay up the word as the traveller does his directions for the way.

The best way to lay it up is, to let it have deep impression on your spirits while you hear it, and to lift up your eyes to the Lord, that he may fix it in your heart, Psal. cxix. 93. 'I will never forget thy precepts,' 2 Tim. i. 12. 'I know in whom I have believed.'

### III. Some things are to follow after hearing the word.

1. Meditation on it in your hearts, Psal. i. 2. The Psalmist thus describes the good man: 'In his law doth he meditate day and night.' This is the harrowing of the seed sown, and the mean to sink it down in the soul, to keep it fast, Luke ix. 44. 'Let these sayings sink down into your ears.' This is the way to guard the word, that it may not slip away, Heb. ii. 4; and a sovereign help to a leaking memory. Enure yourselves to meditation on the word, and ye will find your memories surprisingly strengthened: one particular will bring on another, and one truth meditated on will recal another to your remembrance, and afford you vast delight and pleasure.

2. Conferring of it on your discourse. This was enjoined to the Israelites by Moses, Deut. vi. 6, 7. 'The words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' Luke xxiv. 14. 'And they talked together of all those things which had happened.' The repeating over again of the Lord's word, has sometimes had a relish with it, more taking than at its first coming to the man.



Hence says the spouse, Cant. ii. 10. ‘ My beloved spake and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.’ Talking of it thus on your way from the church, and in your own houses, will be most beneficial to you.

3. *Lastly*, The main thing is practising it in your lives, Luke viii. 15. ‘ That on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience :’ wiping of your spots, and adorning yourselves in holiness of life, by the glass of the word, Jam. i. 25. ‘ Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word,’ &c. The word heard, but not practised, will sink men deeper in damnation; but heard, and practised too, will bring them to eternal salvation, O then be careful to practise what you hear, otherwise it will do you no good.

I shall conclude with an inference or two.

*Inf.* 1. No wonder most of the hearers of the gospel get no good of it. They are at no pains to prepare for hearing it, wrestle not in prayer for the Lord’s blessing upon it, receive it neither with faith nor love, are not solicitous to lay it up in their hearts, and as little to practise it in their lives. How then can they reap benefit by it, when they use not these commanded means?

2. Here is the way to get good of the word, however little good is done by it at this day. Prepare for hearing it; pray earnestly for the blessing of God to accompany it: receive it with faith and love; lay it up in your hearts: and reduce it to practice in your lives,

## THE DUTY OF ATTENDING ON ORDINANCES ENFORCED.

ACTS x. 33.—*Immediately therefore I sent to thee : and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.*

**A**S attendance upon the public ordinances is one of the special means whereby Christ communicates the benefits of redemption to us, I have chosen this text in order to enforce the duty of a diligent attendance upon them the farther upon you.

Our Lord Jesus, the only King and Head of his church, hath appointed ministers his ambassadors to declare his mind unto his people; and though he could teach his people without them, yet the ministry is his ordinance, and by the foolishness of preaching he saves them that believe. Here we have,

1. A call to Peter related. The person calling is Cornelius, a soldier. A Gentile he was, yet a proselyte; a good man, but one who as yet knew not the doctrine of Christ crucified. The person called was Peter; him God honoured to break the ice for the calling of the Gentiles, and to take down the first stone in the partition-wall betwixt Jews and Gentiles. The call itself is in these words, *I sent*. He had sent three men to invite Peter to his house, ver. 7. The reason of the call is thus expressed, *Therefore*, because he had the command of God for that effect. He made quick dispatch in the call; it was done immediately after the mind of God was discovered to him.

2. Peter's compliance with the call commended, *Thou hast well done that thou art come*. It is acceptable to God and to us. Peter had no great inclination to this work; he had his scruples about the lawfulness of it: but God condescends to solve his doubts, and clear his way. It was very offensive to the Christian Jews, which necessitated him to make an apology for his practice, Acts xi. yet after all it was well

done to come, because he came in obedience to the call of God.

3. An address made to Peter when he was come, by Cornelius the caller, in name of himself and those who were with him. In which take notice, (1.) Of a congregation, though small, yet well convened. What the congregation was, see ver. 24. ‘his kinsmen and near friends.’ These, with his family, and those that came with Peter, made up the assembly. The good man made it his business to get not only his own family, but his friends, to wait on the ordinances. (2.) An acknowledgment of God’s presence in a special manner in religious assemblies, *We are all here present before God*. (3.) The great end of their meeting was their souls edification, *to hear*, that is, to hear and obey. And here is what the minister is to preach and the people to receive; it is *what is commanded of God*. The minister has a commission from God, and he must preach, not what men would have him to preach, but what God commands; and the people are to receive nothing that is beyond his commission. The extent of both is *all things*; the minister is to preach, and the people to receive, *all things commanded of God*.

*Obs.* 1. When God discovers his mind in any particular to a person or people, it is their duty presently to comply with it without delay. There should be no disputing after the discovery of the Lord’s mind, Gal. i. 15,—17. The contrary was the fault of Balaam, and of the Jews in Egypt, Jer. xliv.

2. It is a blessed thing for a people to call that minister to whom God himself directs and inclines them. It is like Cornelius, who did not so much as know Peter by name, Acts x. 5. but he goes to God, and God directs him.

3. It is a commendable thing in a minister of Christ to comply with the call of God and his people, though it should be offensive to some, and not very agreeable to his own inclinations. Ministers are to go, not where they will and others would wish them, but where God wills. It was Levi’s commendation, ‘Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.’ Deut. xxxiii. 9.

The doctrine arising from the text is,



DOCT. 'It is the duty of a people to attend on the ordinances, to be all present there before God, where pure ordinances are set up among them, to hear all things commanded of God to the minister whom the Lord has sent them.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Give reasons why people should attend on and be present at ordinances, where God has set them up among them.

II. Shew in what respects people are before the Lord in public ordinances.

III. Consider the disposition of soul wherewith people should come to them.

IV. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to give reasons why people should attend on and be present at ordinances, where God has set them up among them.

1. Because God has commanded it, Heb. x. 25. The Lord calls his people to be present there, wherever it is. Thus there was the tabernacle of the congregation in the wilderness, whither the people resorted to the public worship; and afterwards the temple. And for ordinary the synagogues under the Old Testament were the places of public worship, the ruins of which the church complains of, Psal. lxxiv. 8. It was the practice of Christ himself to attend these places, as we find, Luke iv. 16. He sends ministers to preach, and therefore commands people to hear.

2. Because the public assemblies are for the honour of Christ in the world. They are that place where his honour dwells, where his people meet together to profess their subjection to his laws, to receive his orders, to seek his help to pay him the tribute of praise, the calves of their lips. And forasmuch as all are obliged to these things, all are obliged to be present and attend, and to cast in their mite into this treasury. And therefore the people of God look on Christ's standard in the world as fallen, when these assemblies are gone, as Elijah did, 1 Kings xix. 10.

3. Because these assemblies are the ordinary place where Christ makes his conquest of souls, Rom. x. 14. The gospel is Christ's net wherein souls are caught. And it is always good to be in Christ's way. Who knows when that

good word may come that may take hold of the man's heart, and make him Christ's prisoner, bound with the cords of love? A great number were caught at the first sermon preached after Christ's ascension, and cried out, 'What shall we do?' Acts ii. 37. So Lydia hearing the apostle Paul, her heart was opened, Acts xvi. 14. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Happy are they that get the deepest wounds in this field. 'For the weapons of *this* warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,' 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

4. They are Christ's trysting-place with his people, the galleries wherein our Lord walks, Exod. xx. 24; the mountains of myrrh, where he will be till the day break. Those that mind for communion with God, should seek him there. and wait on him where he has promised to be found. What a disadvantage had Thomas by his absence from one meeting where Christ met with the rest of the disciples!

5. The delights of Christ and his people meet there; for ordinances are the heaven on earth. Christ delights to be there with his people, Psal. lxxxvii. 2. 'The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob,' Luke xxii. 15. 'With desire,' said our Lord, I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.' And they delight to be there with him, and for him. How passionately does David desire the ordinances! Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 2. 'How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.' He prefers a day in God's courts to a thousand: 'I had rather,' says he, 'be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.' And again, 'One thing,' says he, 'have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple,' Psal. xxvii. 4. What good news was it to him to hear of an opportunity of waiting on God there! Psal. cxxii. 1. 'I was glad,' says he, 'when they said unto me, Let us go up into the house of the Lord.'

*Lastly,* The necessities of all that mind for heaven require

it. Had the ordinances not been necessary, God would never have appointed them. And sure they are not more necessary for any than those that least see their need of them. These are the blind souls that have need to come to the market of free grace, for that eye-salve that opens the eyes of those that see not. Have not Christ's soldiers need of them to clear their rusty armour? do not dead souls need them to quicken them? sleepy souls, to awaken them? They are the pools in the way to Zion, which the travellers to Zion have much need of to quench their thirst in their weary journey.

Surely the due consideration of these things may engage us all to make conscience of being all there present, as God gives opportunity.

II. I come to shew, in what respects people are before the Lord at public ordinances. The Lord is every where present; we can be no where but he is there, Psal. cxxxix. 7. But we are before him in a special manner in the public assemblies. He holds the stars in his right hand, and walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Our Lord has a special concern there; the main part of his business on earth lies there; and must he not be about his Father's business! This consideration should engage us to be there. Satan will not miss to be there: where Christ has a church, the devil will endeavour to have a chapel. The fowls will be where there is seed sowing. So some understand that, 1 Cor. xi. 10. 'For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head, because of the angels.' Now Christ is in the assemblies of his people,

1. Representatively. He has his agents there, his ministers, who are the Lord's proxies to court a wife for their Master's Son, 2 Cor. xi. 2. his ambassadors to negotiate a peace betwixt God and sinners, 2 Cor. v. 20. Matth. x. 40. Christ's ministers are but as John was 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness.' The Speaker is in heaven. Hence the Lord is said to speak in or by the prophets. It is the Lord's goodness that the treasure is lodged in earthen, not in heavenly vessels, lest their splendor should darken his glory in men's eyes, and so dazzle their eyes. And for the now glorified, God 'holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it,' Job xxvi. 9.



2. Efficaciously. His power is there, he works there, *et nihil agit in distans*, Psal. lxxv. 1. ‘For that thy name is near,’ says the Psalmist, ‘thy wondrous works declare.’ The word of the Lord is a powerful word. The ministers of Christ drive not an empty chariot, Psal. xlv. 4. ‘In thy majesty ride prosperously.’ Christ is there giving life to some, strength to others, and death’s wounds to others, Mic. ii. 7. Psal. xlv. 5. Hos. vi. 5. The Lord’s word returns not empty; it does always something. Every preaching will either harden or soften you; it will drive you a step nearer heaven or hell. Now, are we before him in his ordinances,

1. As our witness. They had need to carry warily that have many eyes on them. While we are at ordinances, men’s eyes and the devil’s eyes are upon us; but what should affect us most is, that God’s eye is on us in a special manner, noticing how we behave, with what tenderness we handle holy things: and though our outward carriage be never so promising, God is witness to the heart-wanderings, Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

2. As our Judge. God has a tribunal as well as a throne in the public ordinances, to reward or punish his worshippers according to their works. This has made the blood of some to be mingled with their sacrifices, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, Lev. x. 3. God is jealous of his honour. A curious look into the ark cost the Bethshemites dear; and a wrong touch of it cost Uzzah his life. And we would make the same use of that that David did, 1 Chron. xv, 12, 13, ‘Sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel, unto the place that I have appointed for it. For because ye did it not at first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.’ It is true, the gospel-dispensation is more spiritual; and therefore spiritual plagues are more usual now; but these ordinances cure the worst of plagues.

(3.) As our Lawgiver, Isa. xxxiii. 22. We are his creatures, and therefore his will must be our law. We are his upon many accounts; we know not our duty. He has set up the ministry in his church, to declare to people what is their duty, Mal. ii. 7. But, alas! many, by their despising the messengers of the Lord and their message, say, as Psal. xii. 4. ‘Who is lord over us?’ But God will lord it over such in spite of their hearts, Hos. xiii. 10. ‘I will be thy

King.' But the heralds must proclaim the subjects duty, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

(4.) As the Lord and master of the family, who has provided liberally for all of his house. Ministers are the stewards of the house; but he is the Master, that has made the provision in the gospel, Isa. xxv. 6. He sends out his servants, saying, 'Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled,' Prov. ix. 5. Look then how obedient children will stand and wait for supply of their necessities from an affectionate parent; so ought we to stand and wait on in ordinances for the supply of our spiritual wants from our heavenly Father.

(5.) *Lastly*, As our God, which should strike us with reverence, Psal. lxxxix. 7. 'God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints; and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.' Psal. xcv. 6. 'O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.' And this challenges the most serious disposition of our hearts to worship him.

III. I proceed to consider the disposition of soul where-with people should come to the public ordinances. It is with a spirit ready to hear all things commanded ministers of God. It implies the following things.

1. That ministers are to preach nothing to the people but what is the mind and will of God. Lawyers must not speak without authority of the law; and ministers must not speak but with a *Thus saith the Lord*; otherwise they go beyond their commission. The scriptures contain what is to be believed and practised by us. To coin new articles of faith, is the work of Antichrist, not of the ministers of Christ. To impose and teach significant rites and ceremonies in the worship of God, is a piece of Popish dregs in the church of England; concerning which our Lord says, 'In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,' Matth. xv. 9.

2. That it is the duty of ministers to labour to know the mind of God, as to particular messages which they are to carry to their people. Ministers are not to preach, hand over head, whatever truths they can get to say to spend a half-hour in a sermon to the people. A word in season is

very precious, Prov. xxv. 11 ; and xv. 23 ; And ministers had need of the tongue of the learned.

3. Whatever message the Lord gives them to a people, they are to deliver it impartially, *All things commanded them*. It was Paul's comfort that he had done so, Acts xx. 20; 'I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you,' says he to the elders of Ephesus.

4. *Lastly*, People ought to receive these messages from ministers as from the mouth of the Lord, and comply with them ; for it is not bare hearing, but hearing with obedience, that is the hearing pointed at in the text. And with this disposition of soul should people come to ordinances.

Now, this hearing of the word has these properties.

(1.) We should hear reverentially. God speaks by ministers mouths ; and seeing God speaks at all, we must hear so, Psal. lxxxix. 7 ; forecited. See how Eglon behaved, when he was accosted by Ehud, Judg. iii. 20, 21 ; 'I have a message from God unto thee,' said Ehud. It is added, 'And he [Eglon] arose out of his seat ;' denoting the reverence with which he was to receive the message. And so should we.

(2.) Diligently and attentively, Isa. lv. 2; 'Hearken diligently unto me,' says the Lord. God sends no message to us but what is of great concernment to us to hear; he does not take up our time with trifles; and when God speaks, it becomes us to be attentive.

(3.) Understandingly, so as to know the mind of God in what is preached, Matth. xiii. 11; We must endeavour to see heavenly things in their divine lustre, and to understand the things as well as the words. We should 'look into the perfect law of liberty, and continue therein, being not forgetful hearers, but doers of the word.' And were this the way of hearing, ministers would get more soul-cases to resolve than they do.

(4.) Believingly, John ix. 27; He that hears as out of the mouth of God must needs believe what is said. If the word be not believed, it is all one as if it were not heard, Heb. iv. 2; The soul rightly disposed to hear, is ready to yield itself the captive of divine revelation, and receive the kingdom of God as a little child to hear with application. The Lord's word is compared to rain, Amos vii. 16; and the soul should be as the dry and gaping ground, ready to



drink it in, Psal. cxliiii. 6; though, alas! most are like the rock, upon which the rain makes no impression. Ministers make the plaister, but faith of application makes it stick.

5. *Lastly*, So as to practise what we hear. Though the ear hear, if the feet be not set on God's way, it is not acceptable to God, Jam. i. 22; That hearing that fills the head with knowledge, but not the heart with holiness, will serve only to let people see the way to hell more clearly.

I come now to the improvement of this doctrine.

USE I. For reproof. It reproofs,

1. Those who absent themselves from ordinances, and will not come to hear what is commanded us of God. A very small matter will prevail with many to sit at home, and loiter away the Lord's day, in many places. When ministers are at pains to seek something that might edify their souls, they will not be at the pains to hear. O what contempt is poured on the gospel at this day by the pride of some, and the laziness of others! Whatever temptations any of you may have this way, I advise such, when they meet any thing that may seem to hinder them from the public ordinances, that they do, in the first place, weigh the matter before the Lord, and see if it will bear weight there. If it do, they may look to God for the upmaking of their loss; if not, they cannot. For it is a most deceitful principle of some, that they can spend the Sabbath-day as well at home. It reflects on the wisdom of God in appointing public ordinances, and is most unlike the practice of the saints, to whom it was a great burden to be deprived of them. As for those who separate from our communion, I wish they would consider that Christ keeps communion with us, as many of the children of God can testify; and then say, as Zech. viii. 23; 'We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.'

2. It reproofs those who come to ordinances, but hear not the word as becomes those who are to hear what is commanded of God. Such are,

(1.) Irreverent hearers. Many behave so as it appears there is no fear of God before their eyes. Some are sleeping, others gazing hither and thither, altogether careless and inattentive, to whom the word is as the seed presently picked up by the fowls. Their bodies are present, but their hearts

are gone; they are the idols that have eyes, but see not; that have ears, but hear not.

(2.) Supercilious nice hearers, who sit as Judges of the word, and not as they that are to be judged by it. Hence such will be ready to commend the preacher, not to loath themselves; or else to reproach the preacher, and endeavour to expose him: like the riddle that lets through the good grain, and keeps the chaff; or like flies that fasten on festering sores.

(3.) Ignorant and stupid hearers, who hear the word, but neither know nor endeavour to know God's mind in it. A good voice and good word please them. These are not concerned to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

(4.) Unbelieving hearers, Isa. liii. 1; Unbelief is a defence against the power of the word, Matth. xiii. 58; and an unbelieving heart is a proud heart, ready to storm at the word, like Ahab. And if the word hit them, their passion ariseth, the minister meant them, and wanted to expose them, and so they are filled with prejudice.

5. *Lastly*, Such as make no application of the word to themselves, but are ready to give it away to others. It is the weakness of godly souls, sometimes to give ear to nothing but what may tend to their discouragement; and it is the neckbreak of others to give away threats from themselves.

3- It reproves those who do not set themselves to hear what God commands ministers to preach, but will command ministers to preach so and so. Thus bands have been laid on the gospel in our land in the late persecuting times, when the exercise of the ministry was allowed by the magistrate with limitations, which could neither be imposed nor accepted without sin. And as little power have the people to limit them, or give orders concerning what we should preach; but every faithful minister will say as Micaiah, 1 Kings xxii. 14; 'As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak.'

USE II. Of exhortation. Attend on ordinances, and come with a design reverently, diligently, attentively, understandingly, believingly, and so as to practise, to hear what is commanded us of God. We desire you to take nothing as matter of faith on our authority, but to do as the Bereans, who searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so

Acts xvii. 11; I offer the following motives to press this exhortation.

1. Consider the way how the word came to the world. It was by the Mediator, John i. 18; When Adam fell, death stared him in the face; and he ran away from God, till the word of reconciliation came forth, Gen. iii. 15; which disappointed the expectation of devils, surprised angels, and revived the self-murdering creature.

2. Consider, it is the word of life, Deut. xxxii. 46, 47; Nothing concerns us so nearly as this. If ye do not prize the word, and hear what is commanded us of God, there can be no comfort on a deathbed. It will make us table complaints against you before the Lord; and we will have a sad meeting at the great day. But if ye will hear, ye will be our joy and crown; your souls shall be saved in the day of the Lord, and we will bless the day that ever we met. Come to ordinances with a keen appetite after the bread of life; and pray for us, that the Lord may deal kindly with us, and furnish us with proper nourishment for your souls.

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#### A CAVEAT AGAINST RECEIVING THE GOSPEL IN VAIN.

2 COR. vi. 1.—*We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.*

**I** HAVE been calling you to a diligent attendance upon the ordinances, and now I come to beseech you not to receive the grace of God in vain: for if you should attend the means of grace ever so carefully, yet if you receive the grace of God in vain, all your labour is lost, and ye must perish in your sins at last.

The words I have read are a pathetic exhortation, in which,

1. The party exhorting is the apostle, in his own name, and that of all faithful ministers, who are called *workers together with God*. Compare 1 Cor. iii. 9; In the purchase of salvation Christ had none with him; but in the application of it he makes use of gospel-ministers, working with him, as



instrumental causes, in exhorting, &c. and bringing the word to the ears of people.

2. The manner of the exhortation, *beseeching*; which denotes mildness and gentleness in dealing with souls, and withal earnestness and fervency of address.

3. The matter of it. *The grace of God* here denotes the gospel, as it is expressly called, Tit. ii. 11; It is so denominated, (1.) In respect of its rise, which was mere grace. (2.) Of its subject, being the doctrine of grace, offering the free favour of God to sinners in Christ. (3.) In respect of its end, which is grace. (4.) Of its revelation to particular places. To *receive it in vain*, is to have the gospel among them, but not to be the better of it to salvation, as the seed is in vain received by the ground, which grows not up, but is lost. The doctrine is,

Doctr. 'That people to whom the gospel is sent, had need to take heed that they receive it not in vain.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. How the gospel may be received in vain.

II. Make improvement.

I. I am to shew, how the gospel may be received in vain, And here it will be necessary to shew,

1. In what respects the gospel cannot be in vain.

2. In what respects it may be received in vain.

*First*, I am to shew, in what respects the gospel cannot be in vain. And it cannot be in vain,

1. In respect of God; he cannot fall short of what he purposeth to bring to pass by it, Isa. xlv. 10; 'My counsel shall stand, (says he), and I will do all my pleasure.' That looking for fruit, mentioned, Isa. v. 4; is ascribed to God after the manner of men; but an omniscient omnipotent Being cannot properly be disappointed, Isa. lv. 10, 11; 'For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.'

(2.) All his elect will be brought in by it. Hence, when the apostles Barnabas and Paul preached at Antioch in Pisidia, and met with much opposition, it is observed, however, that ‘as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed,’ Acts xiii. 48; The sound of the gospel-trumpet will gather the elect, however vain the sound be to others; for Christ’s people shall be made willing in the day of his power, Psal. cx. 3; Though the rain fall in vain on the rocks, yet it does not so on the good ground. And that glorious instrument will be honourably laid by at the great day, having done its work.

(2.) His mercy and justice will be cleared by it, so as that gospel-despisers shall appear most justly condemned, Acts xiii. 46; while men have rejected the counsel of God against themselves. The offer of reconciliation will justify God’s procedure abundantly against gospel-despisers.

2. It cannot be in vain, in respect of faithful ministers, who, according to the grace given them, pursue the great end of their office, viz. their acting as ambassadors for God, and praying sinners in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled unto God, 2 Cor. v. 20.

(1.) In respect of their acceptance with God. Though their labours do no good, God will accept of their sincere endeavours to serve him in his work, Gal. iv. 11; compare 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16; Preaching the gospel faithfully, and warning every man, is our duty; converting of souls is God’s work. If ministers faithfully discharge their duty, and yet success answer not, God will accept their work, Ezek. xxxiii. 8, 9. Isa. vi.

(2.) In respect of their reward of grace. Some ministers God sets to tread out the corn, while they freely eat of their labours, and have the satisfaction to see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in their Master’s hand. The mouths of others are muzzled; and they have nothing but weary work, like that of the disciples, when they said to their Lord, ‘We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing,’ Luke v. 5; But it shall not be in vain: God does not proportion his faithful servants reward to their success, but to their pains and faithfulness. For as it was with the Master, so is it with the servants, Isa. xlix. 4; I have laboured in vain, (says he), I have spent my strength for nought; yet

surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.'

3. It cannot be altogether in vain in respect of honest-hearted hearers, Micah. ii. 7. 'Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?' When the word falls on good ground, it will bring forth fruit, though not always alike. It is hard to say, that ever God sends his gospel to any place, but there are some to be bettered by it, even then when he is taking his farewell of a people, as in the case of the Jews. There were seven thousand in Israel that had not bowed the knee to Baal in the time of Elijah, even when that prophet thought there had not been one.

4. It cannot be utterly in vain as to any that hear it, Is. lv. 11. forecited. It will have some effect following it. Even those who most of all receive it in vain as to good success, yet it is not in vain.

(1.) As to a testimony for God against them, to be produced at the last day, Rev. iii. 20. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me.' Behold angels and men, be ye witnesses, that here is an offer of me to sinners. Though they should refuse to hear the message with their bodily ears, yet if it come where they are, it will be a witness against them, Matth. x. 14, 15. The dust of their feet shall witness they were there with Christ's message, and that salvation was in their offer. The servants of Christ must set up the standard, whether any will gather to it or not, Ezek. ii. 7. See ver. 5.

(2.) As to manifestation of unsoundness, Eph. v. 13. As the light of the sun will discover things in their own colours, though we wink never so hard; so the gospel will hang the sign of folly at every man's door out of Christ. The gospel was in vain to none more than the greatest pretenders to religion in Christ's time; but see the effect of it, Mal. iii. 2. 'But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like the refiner's fire, and like fullers soap.' Matth. iii. 12. 'His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into his garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.' The wind will discover chaff by corn, though omnipotency must be at the work to change it into good grain. Hence the gospel oft-times draws the pillow



from under people's heads, that never thoroughly awaken, tormenting them that dwell on the earth. Hence we read of some that 'say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits: get out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the holy One of Israel to cease from before us,' Isa. xxx. 10, 11; 'There is much noise at this day about faithful preaching; and I do not doubt unfaithful preachers are wanting; but I greatly doubt if Christ's thoughts and men's thoughts will agree about what it is. Concerning this I would ask you,

*Quest.* 1. Whether that preaching which crosses the heart-corruptions of the hearers, even the best of them, or that which is suited and most agreeable to the humours of the hearers, and tickles them most, is the most faithful preaching? See Gal. i. 10; 'Do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.' Where I shall only observe, that Paul makes no difference of men, professors or others.

2. Whether can a soul, ignorant of Christ and its own natural state, a profane man and a formal hypocrite, sit softest under that preaching, whose main scope is to level at people's particular case, on which the balance will turn at the great day, or that which lies further off from the vitals of practical godliness, and rubs on none so little as the hearers? 2 Tim. ii. 15.

3. Whether the great stress of faithful preaching lies in insisting chiefly on such sins of the time as may be reformed, and yet we go to hell at the hinder end, or on those things that have been, are, and will be, the bloody sins of all times, which if they could be got reformed, Christ would get heart-friends, and we should certainly see his face for ever in heaven?

4. *ult.* Whether is it the most faithful preaching that fills the hearers with convictions of guilt, self-loathing, and deep humiliation before the Lord, or that which sends them away commending the preacher, and puffed up with self-conceit? If faithful preaching were weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, the hearts of most hearers would say, that they have more of it than they can bear. I do profess, I have had less difficulty to preach things relating to the public, when I knew those were hearing me whose hearts would have been

galled with it, than amongst you, where there appears more zeal for these things than for true holiness of heart and life, lest my deceitful heart should be led aside to preach to please men. And not without grief of heart have I often seen the snare, when, upon my beginning to speak of such things, an unusual attention and liveliness has suddenly run through among us, which has presently died out with that particular, and become as flat and dead as before at the most weighty points of practical godliness. But I must discharge my conscience according to my small measure, both as to the case of the public and private, whatever use men make of it.

(3.) As to execution on souls, if not on lusts. Christ's sword is two-edged, and with one of the two it will wound, Psal. xlv. 5; If it miss a man's lusts, it will not miss his soul, Hos. vi. 5; 'If it open not the blind eye, it will put it out: if it soften not the hard heart, it will make it harder, Isa. vi. 10; The gospel never left a nation, parish, or person, as it found them, but either better or worse. 'If I had not come,' says Christ, 'and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin,' John xv. 22; The ministers of the gospel in its most unsuccessful times, drive not an empty chariot; Christ is in it, and his arrows are flying about him, either to kill or make alive.

(4.) *Lastly*, As to the aggravation of men's condemnation, Matth. xi. 22, 24; The more the light of the gospel is despised on earth, the more violent is the flame in hell. Where the ladder to heaven is set up and not used, there will be a more deep sinking into the pit. There is no sin like the despising of the remedy of sin. Refused grace will burn like coals of juniper, Heb. x. 29.

*Secondly*, I come to shew, in what respects the gospel may be received in vain. A thing is received in vain when it falls short of its native effects and ends, as physic does when it purgeth not, Gal. iv. 11; Now, in the general, the gospel is received in vain,

1. When it profits not men to salvation, which is the great end of the contrivance of the gospel, Phil. ii. 16; When men die eternally with the meat of their souls in their mouths, and starve while the manna rains about their tent-doors; while the soul remains and dies in the prison, though Christ comes and proclaims liberty to it; thus it is often received in vain, Luke xiv.

2, When the fruits of it are not brought forth in people's lives, Matth. iii. 8 ; When the gospel has its native effect on men, it changes their hearts and lives. It is the rain of heaven that will have meet fruits following it, if it be not received in vain. The fruits of the gospel are two, faith and holiness.

(1.) Faith, Rom. x. 17 ; ' Faith cometh by hearing.' The gospel is that which holds forth the mean of the soul's reunion with God by faith in Christ, the only way to bring sinners back to God again. Now, when this is not effected, the gospel is received in vain. Hence the prophet complains, Isa. liii. 1 ; ' Who hath believed our report?'

(2.) Holiness, Tit. ii. 11 ; When this seed of the word is sown in the heart, it will sanctify it, John xv. 3 ; Eph. v. 26 ; It is that word by which the elect are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, having a converting and sanctifying power when impregnated by the Spirit. Now, according as these things fail, the gospel is received in vain. More particularly, the gospel is received in vain,

1. When the doctrine of it is corrupted, Gal. iv. 11 ; as in vain does that stomach receive meat, that corrupts it instead of digesting it. And thus is the gospel entertained in the land at this day, while error and delusions abound, and the confession of faith, that excellent standard of pure doctrine, is attacked and vilified on every hand ; and more particularly when the doctrine of grace is corrupted, against which almost all sects do bend their force, and in opposition to which they do usually meet. Two things here deserve tears of blood.

(1.) Much legal preaching, where duty is indeed pressed, and sin reproved, but the evangelic nature of duties is little cleared up, and men are driven into themselves to spin their own ruin out of their own bowels, and Christ and his grace are not preached, because not understood. And, which is most lamentable, there is little sense among professors to discern this legal strain that reigns in the sermons of many, but *bona vox et bona verba*.

(2.) Much legal practice among professors. Their duties, like Dragons, are set in the room of Christ. There is little experience of turning out of ourselves, but a constant turning in to ourselves for what we do. And no small weight is laid on duties, nay, upon a very opinion in the matter of God's



favour. The reason is, they have never had the work of humiliation deep enough on their spirits.

2. When the simplicity of gospel-worship is forsaken, and is adulterated with men's inventions, Matth. xv. 2. 2 Cor. xi. 3. And even thus the idolatry of the mass, and the superstitious service of the church of England, have dared to set up their face, with the countenance of not a few, in a land of light. England once had the simplicity of gospel-worship established among them. Had it not been so far received in vain, they had not sit down again on their old dregs; and had our rulers had a due regard to the simplicity of the gospel, they had not in their union with them, consented to their fixing themselves on these dregs of theirs, contrary to moral duty forbidding to consent to sin, and to the superadded obligation of the covenant. And it may be, were the temptation laid to our doors, it would appear that we have received the gospel in vain too. For when once people decline from God's institutions, and obtrude their fancies for Bible duties, it is hard to say how far they may go. But beware of this. Let us be spiritual in our walk with God; it is the best preservative that I know against it.

3. When they are ashamed to appear for it, and have not a brow to keep and hold fast what the Lord has given. In vain is it received, that people have no confidence to hold fast when they have it, Rev. iii. 11. How many are ashamed of gospel truths and ways! they will be giped out of them. We must contend for the faith; and this is a day wherein the Lord seems to be calling this church to contend for those privileges which he has given her, and none have power to take from her, particularly that of appointing fasts and thanksgivings; though we should manage our contendings in such a way as becomes the matters of the God of order. Prayers, tears, and the word of their testimony, are the most proper arms of the church.

4. When the gospel cannot look gross immoralities out of countenance among people. Surely in vain is it there received where the devil reigns at ease notwithstanding, Luke xix. 8, 9. Truly much in vain is the gospel received among us this way. Ah! Sirs, is it not so when profane swearing is so frequent, Sabbath-breaking, contempt of gospel-ordinances, uncleanness, every one devouring another, lying, cheating, abound, and common honesty is rare to be found? &c.

Truly it is a sign that there is little power with ministers preaching, and little room it gets in people's hearts.

5. When it leaves professors upon their dregs of formality, as well as the profane in their profanity. It is but cold entertainment the gospel gets when it gets room once or twice a-day in people's houses, but has no access to their hearts, to raise up there the power of godliness; truly it will never set them the length of heaven, 2 Tim. iii. 5. Ah for the deep lethargy that this generation is fallen into! conversion-work is much at a stand, soul-exercise is grown a stranger to the most part; there is no growth but in naughtiness and self-conceit.

6. When gospel-ordinances and gospel-ministers are contemned. Were not the gospel received in vain, the house where his honour dwells, and the galleries where he walks, would be prized; and the feet of them that bear the glad tidings would be precious. But, alas! all is contrary here. His ordinances are trampled upon, his servants are discouraged, and broken on every hand. Few want brow enough to break over the awful hedge that God has set about them; 'He that despiseth you, despiseth me.' We are as little troubled with the scrupulous in coming to us for information from the word concerning different practices, as with cases of soul-exercise.

7. When they are not thankful for it. The Lord hath done great things for us; but the generation is waxed wanton, so as there seems to be a sort of fondness to see the church in confusion again. Well, come when it will, it is like we will cool of that heat, and learn to prize what is now lightly let of.

8. *Lastly*, Most of all when Christ is not received by faith into the soul, Matth. xxii. Were there never so much strictness of life, mortification, reeling amongst the affections, and this be wanting, all is to no purpose. Unbelief, or rejecting of Christ, is the great quarrel that God pursues in time and eternity against the hearers of the gospel. But, ah! is not the preaching of Christ sapless at this day? are not our eyes held, that we cannot behold his glory? he is despised and ejected of men still.

I shall conclude with an improvement of this subject.

Take heed ye receive not the grace of God, the gospel, in

vain. Two things ye would especially take heed to in this matter.

1. Take heed the gospel leave you not still out of Christ. It is certain, (1.) That the gospel finds people growing upon the old stock, and out of Christ, Ezek. xvi. (2.) That without Christ men are without hope: let them profess or be what they will, if they be not ingrafted into Christ, they are nothing, Eph. ii. 12. John xv. 6. (3.) That the gospel is the great mean appointed of God to bring sinners to Christ, the ministry of reconciliation, 2 Cor. v. 18. It is by this that sinners are brought to the marriage of the King's Son, Matth. xxii. O take heed ye receive not the gospel in vain. The cry, Cant. iii. 2. ult. 'Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart,' is come to your ears; beware ye sit not still. These invitations, Psal. xxiv. 7. 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in;' and Rev. iii. 20. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me;' beware they leave you not so. There is a treasure in this field, one pearl of great price in this market, and it is in your offer.

2. Take heed it leave you not without a saving change in your hearts and lives. It is impossible you can be saved without this, John iii. 3. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Heb. xi. 14. And this gospel is the mean of it, 1 Pet. i. 23, 24, 25. Faithful ministers will be in pain till Christ be formed in people, Gal. iv. 19. What is their preaching, beseeching, exhorting, &c. but pains to bring forth? But, alas! we may sit down with that, Isa. xxvi. 18. 'We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind, we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.' O for that day when that promise shall be accomplished, ver. 19. 'Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise: awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.' And this is a change that must be carrying on while here, Eph. iv. 21. and that by the same means it was begun, unless ye receive



the grace of God in vain, John xv. 2. O! Sirs, what branches of the old man is this knife snedding off; what hellish weeds is the gospel in its ordinary preaching to you plucking up? Sure they are not wanting in our hearts and lives, and sure there will be some execution doing on them, if ye receive not the gospel in vain.

Dear friends, God has sent you the gospel, and has set up his ordinances among you; despise not the treasure, because it is in such an earthen vessel. I would fain see the gospel doing good, a day of God's power to Ettrick again. I dare not think I have been altogether useless here: but truly, when I look upon the case of this parish in general, and on the success of my ministry in it, my heart sinks, being afraid that I have bestowed labour in vain, yea, worse than merely in vain: and God, though most justly, has dealt bitterly with me, and put a heavy, heavy piece of work in my hand. But O that the doleful effects of this reached no farther than to me! O that it were well with you, though my eyes were held not to see it for my comfort! But the works of the flesh are manifest, and continue and grow under a preached gospel, to which the appetite is lost, while the beauty and glory of practical godliness is under a dreadful vail amongst us. I would not willingly stand in the way of your mercy; but if I be indeed the stumbling-block that lies between you and Christ and the power of godliness, I pray the Lord may remove that block out of your way, what way he thinks best, that another face for Christ, for the gospel and true godliness, might be put upon the parish of Ettrick. But stand I must in my post, till he that set me in it call me off; and I desire to be doing while it is to-day, ere the night come on when there shall be no more working. Wonder not that this matter is laid out with this weight: We are workers together with God, and therefore have need to blush and be humbled, that we cannot be more deeply concerned that ye receive not the grace of God in vain \*. Consider,

1. We are workers with God. It is not our own but our Lord's work that we are about. God has made our

\* The author here plainly alludes to the distracted state of the parish, and the sea of trouble he was tossed in, on account of the unmanageable spirit of the parishioners, fed by the malignant leaven which the Old Dissenters spread through it, and of which he repeatedly and heavily complains in his Memoirs.

Lord and Master heir of all things, and he has sent us forth to court a spouse for him. There is none than can say so much to the commendation of their Lord as we may : for he is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand, yea, he is altogether lovely : and there is no bride so unworthy as the daughter of Zion. And shall our Lord get the naysay off the hands of ugly, hell-hued, beggarly souls, and the prince of darkness be preferred to the Prince of Peace? Our Lord has got the gift of the kingdom from his Father, and of this land among others, Psal. ii. 8. and he has sent us out to beseech you and command you in his name to submit to our royal Master ; and must we take him word, that ye will not have this man to reign over you ? Luke xix. 14.

2. God works with us. We are but the voice of one crying ; the Speaker is in heaven, and speaks from heaven, though by men, Heb. xii. 25. Therefore the slighting of our message is a slighting of the Lord himself : See Matth. xxviii. 20. ‘ Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.’ Have ye never had the secrets of your hearts made manifest by the preaching of the word? why then fall ye not down before our Lord? why say ye not, We will go with you, for the Lord is with you? O fight not against God.

3. The message we bring you is the grace of God ; and shall it be received in vain ? This gospel,

(1.) Is most necessary grace. What a dismal darkness overclouded the world by Adam’s fall, more terrible than if the sun, moon, and stars, had been for ever wrapt up in the blackness of darkness, in which we should for ever have lain, had not this grace appeared as a shining sun to dispel it, Tit. ii. 11. So the word rendered *appeared* properly signifies. And shall we now like night-owls flee from the face of the rising sun, and like wild beasts get into our hellish dens, when this sun is up? Are we struck blind with its light, and such creatures of darkness, that we will love darkness rather than light?

(2.) It is an uncommon grace. This sun enlightens but a small part of the world. The most part are yet without the gospel ; and this land had it not always. Nothing but grace brought it to, and has kept it with us. And shall we receive it in vain? Ah? will not the wild Americans think us unworthy of a place in the same hell with them?

(3.) It is the greatest grace that God ever bestowed on the world. God has given some nations gold mines, precious stones, spices, plenty of corns, &c. and he has given some the gospel without these ; so that we may say of them, ‘ Israel then shall dwell in safety alone ; the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine ; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel : who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency ! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places,’ Deut. xxxiii. 28, 29. Barley-bread and the gospel is good cheer, if people receive it not in vain, Isa. xxx. 20, 21. There is a treasure in the gospel, Christ in it is the greatest of all mercies, Matth. xiii. 44. Ah ! shall such a price be put in the hands of fools, that have no heart to it.

(4.) It is God’s last grace to the world, Heb. i. 1. No other dispensation of grace shall ever the world see more. Now, Sirs, the last ship for Immanuel’s land is making ready to go ; therefore now or never, Heb. x. 26, 27. ‘ For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.’ This gospel is the Lord’s farewell sermon to the world. The Lord has made a feast for the world these five thousand years, and the last dish is served up now. O then receive it not in vain !

(5.) *Lastly*, It is grace that may be lost, Matth. xxiii. 37, 38. The sun of the gospel has gone down in some places, where it shined as clearly as ever it did in Scotland, and God knows if ever it rise again there. That we have received it much in vain, is plain from the heavy hand of God on us at this day in temporal calamities, Hos. ii. 9. yea, and his threatening us with the removal of the gospel, ver. 11. O then receive it not in vain ; but, while ye have the light, be walking in it : for to look no farther than the entertainment the gospel is getting at this day, it is a sad sign there is a black night abiding us : so that I think ministers and people should set themselves about it as a way-going commodity.



## THE DANGER OF NOT COMPLYING WITH THE GOSPEL-CALL

PROV. ix. 12.—*If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.*

**T**HIS verse is the epilogue or conclusion of the gospel-treaty with sinners, carried on with them by the messengers of Christ in his name. It is a solemn declaration or protestation that it is shut up with. The entertainment the gospel meets with, is twofold, and there are two sorts (and but two) of gospel-hearers. (1.) Compliers with the gospel-call; these are called the *wise*. (2.) Refusers; these are styled *scorners*. The declaration looks to both, and is carried as it were, after the offer is made, to every individual man and woman's door that hears the gospel. It is not, *They that are wise, shall be wise for themselves*; but hereby the Lord speaks to every one in particular, *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself*, &c. Which class soever one puts himself into, here is his case declared. (1.) *If thou be wise*, and comply, the gain shall be thine own; it is not the Lord's, but the fruit shall drop into thine own lap. (2.) *If thou scornest*, and refusest, the loss shall be thine, it will lie chiefly at least on thine own head. So the exclusive particle is taken, Psal. li. 4. 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned.'

I design not to insist on these words, but only with them to shut up the call to the improvement of the gospel and religion which I have been giving you. Thus the great duty is laid before you: and now I would apply the words of the text unto you on this occasion, and to every one of you. Ye have heard the nature of faith and repentance, the utility of public ordinances for salvation, and the necessity of not receiving of the gospel in vain. Now, sinner, what wilt thou do? wilt thou comply with the gospel-offer or not? Well, I protest and declare in the terms of the text, *If thou be wise thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it*. I shall branch out this protestation in three particulars.

*First*, If thou be not a complier with the gospel-call, thou art a scorner of it; there is no mids. This is evident from the text, which divides all gospel-hearers into these two sorts. Now, thou art not a complier with the gospel-call, as long as,

1. Thou entertainest any prejudice against religion, and wilt not come to Christ, John v. 40. Thou art a refuser in that case, thou wilt not be obedient, but turnest away thine ear and shoulder. Men may receive and comply with a form of religion and a profession, who yet are under reigning prejudice against the power of godliness, 2 Tim. iii. 5. Now, since religion lies inwardly, and consists not in word, but in power, these are not compliers, for they say they will not come into the inner court.

2. Thou art in a doubt whether to come or not, or delayest and puttest it off. Halts between two opinions are not compliers with the gospel-call. Nor will the call admit of a delay, like that of the sluggard, ‘Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep,’ Prov. vi. 10. For see the effect of such a sluggish delay, ver. 11. ‘So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.’ It is ‘To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.’ If thou delay then till to-morrow, thou rejectest the call, thou art a scorner of the offer.

3. If in any case thou dost not come, dost not turn from thy sins unto God in Christ, sincerely, thoroughly, and universally, thou dost not comply, Jer. iii. 10. The hypocrite, that satisfies himself with his partial turning, is a non-complier, a rebel against King Christ, as well as the profane, and shall bear the weight of it, Psal. cxxv. 5. ‘As for such as turn aside into their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.’ Now, in this case of thy not complying with the gospel-call, our God looks on thee as the scorner of it, Psal. i. 1. Prov. i. 22, 26. What king proclaiming an indemnity to rebels, would not look on those that refused to take the benefit of it, as scorers of his clemency? Is it possible for him to look on them as neutrals with respect to his interest? nay, he must look on them as engrained enemies to his person and government. So is the case here. And that thou art guilty of scorning in this, will be evident, if you consider, that, by your not complying with the gospel-call,

(1.) Thou abusest the mercy, goodness, and patience of God. God offers thee mercy and grace in his own way, upon thy coming to him in Christ, leaving thy sins. But thou graspest at his mercy in thy sins, as if thou wouldst offer violence to the mercy of God, saying, as Deut. xxix. 19. 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.' Thou snatchest peace out of his hand, and by thy grasping of gospel-privileges, making no conscience of gospel-duties, scornest the call.

(2.) Thou slightest, making no account of the gospel-call, but indeed lookest on it as a trifling, inconsiderable thing, Job xli. 29; Is not this the treatment the gospel meets with from the most part? 'They make light of it,' Matth. xxii. 5; The great offer of the gospel is despised, the good things it offers are undervalued, and any the *least* worldly pleasure or profit is preferred; and for the threatenings wherewith it is backed, they are in effect looked upon but as bugbears and scarecrows, the sounding again of the mountains; and thus they are scorned.

(3.) Thou exposest it to shame and dishonour; and is not that scorning, Prov. xx. 1; A generous spirit knows how far a man is out, when his offered kindness and good-will is neglected. And thus thou treatest the God that made thee. He offers thee his friendship before the world, angels, and men, and thou regardest it not; the Son of God courts thee by his ambassadors to a marriage with himself, but thou slightest the proposal. And is not that to scorn him, and rub an affront on him, before all that are witnesses to the neglect thou puttest upon him?

(4.) Thou failest of thy fair promises, and so defeatest and frustratest good expectations concerning thee. And is not that scorning? Matth. ii. 16; Heathens do not scorn the royal Bridegroom; for as he was never in their offer, so they never said they would not take him: but as thou wast baptized in his name, thou didst engage to be his, and yet thou ruest again, and sayest, Thou wilt have none of him. How many times hast thou broken thy word to him, after thou hadst given a consent, yea, sealed the contract before many witnesses at a sacrament or so? How often hast thou scorned thy God, as the son did his father, saying, 'I go, but went not?' Matth. xxi. 30.

5.) *Lastly*, Thou makest thyself merry with thy disobe-



dience to this call, Prov. xiv. 9; Is not that scorning? How many are they that expressly mock at religion and seriousness, and look on many of the duties of religion as below them? But besides, whatever joy thou hast in any thing, especially in sinful practices, while thou slightest the call of the gospel, it is in effect a scorning of that call. Even as the condemned malefactor, who being offered a reprieve or pardon, refuses it, and yet is jovial, does scorn the pardon, the king's mercy.

Hence ye may conclude, that God will deal with you as scorers. A king finding himself mocked and scorned, falls into rage, as Herod did, Matth. ii. 16. And God's anger will burn hot against the scorers of his grace, Prov. i. 22. 26. Those that will have none of his grace, will drink deep of his cup of vengeance, Luke xix. 27.

*Secondly*, If thou comply with the gospel-call, thou shalt therein act wisely for thyself: the gain shall be thine own, the fruit shall fall into thine own bosom. Two things are imported in this.

1. Men, by their complying with the gospel call to faith, and holiness, and repentance, do not bring any profit or gain to God. There is a great profit by it, but it descends to themselves, ascends not to God, Job xxii. 2 and xxxv. 7. Psal, xvi. 2.

To confirm this, consider,

(1.) God is infinite in perfections, self-sufficient, and therefore the creatures can add nothing to him; for nothing can be added to what is infinite; and nothing given unto him who possesseth all things.

(2.) All the goodness and profitableness of men or angels, or any creature, comes from God. He that gives all things to all, needs nothing from any, Acts xvii. 25. We receive all from God: where is that, then, we have to give him, whereby he may be profited?

*Inf.* 1. Then let no man be scared from coming to God in Christ, because of his unworthiness, that he is an useless and a fruitless creature, that can do nothing for God. For the best and holiest of men cannot profit him. He will never turn his back, because we bring nothing with us, Isa. lv. 2.

2. Mistake not the reason of our Lord's earnestness with you to bring you to repentance. It is not that he expects

any advantage by your return; it is for your own good, not for his. He is not dealing with you, as one that hires a servant, because he needs one, and cannot want one; but like a compassionate person that is dealing with a frantic one, that will needs destroy himself in the water. God may say to the greatest men, the richest, aye, and the most penitent sinners, and the holiest alive, I have no need of you.

3. Ye can do God no real hurt by your continuing impenitent in your sins, Job xxxv. 6, 8. Your sins can reach him as little to his loss, as your obedience to his profit. All sin is against the mind of God, but there is no sin against the happiness of God. If it were possible, and all the angels in heaven, and all the men on earth, should conspire with the devils against him, it could not diminish one jot of his happiness, nor create him the least real uneasiness thereby. All is but like a dog's barking at the moon, or one's rushing his head against a rock, which stands unmoved, but he is wounded.

4. *Lastly*, By thy compliance with the call of God, and the duties of religion, while others slight them, do not thou think thou obligest God, or that he is more indebted to thee than to others, Luke xvii. 10. Thou actest indeed more for thy own interest than they; but as he suffers no damage by their folly, so he reaps no advantage by thy duties.

2. If thou compliest with the call of the gospel, the profit shall be thine own; though God do not and cannot gain by it, thou shalt. *Thou shalt be wise for thyself.* The phrase imports two things.

1st, Thou shalt gain by it, thou shalt advance thy own interest thereby. Men praise them that do good to themselves; they that hearken to the gospel-call do so. When the rest of the world are mispending their time and talents like a parcel of fools, thou art acting a wise part, consulting thy own true interest. Briefly, this gain lies in two things.

(1.) In saving, or preventing of loss. Thou shalt prevent the loss of God's favour, thy own soul, happiness, &c. A penny saved is a penny gained. And is not a soul saved from the pit a noble gain? Well, if thou be wise for thyself, thou shalt save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.

(2.) In getting what we want. If thou be wise for thyself thou shalt not only save, but get, make a purchase.

Thou shalt gain for time, and gain for eternity, 1 Tim. iv. 8. Whatever drops out of the promise, or is wrung out of the everlasting covenant, they drop all into the lap of the penitent sinner. And there is all in them for time and eternity. The earth is in them, and the heavens are in them. So shalt thou be wise for thyself in gaining these.

*2dly*, Nobody shall go between thee and thy gain, in the enjoyment of it. How often is that verified quickly, 'One soweth, and another reapeth;' one has the pains, and another gets the fruit? Matth. vi. 20. 'Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.' Many a wise man of the world is a fool for himself, and wise for others. He gathers, and others enjoy the treasure. And death makes it so at length; and therefore the world's good things are called another man's, only those of another world are our own, which no man shall leave to his heirs, Luke xvi. 12. Now, if *thou be wise for thyself*, thou shalt carry thy gain into another world with thee, and it shall be thine own, and not another's.

*Thirdly*, If by not complying with the gospel-call, thou scornest it, thou shalt get the weight of that to bear thyself: *Thou alone shalt bear it*. And it is heavier than mountains of brass, and of everlasting continuance, even everlasting judgment without mercy, Prov. i. 26. And,

1. Thou shalt bear the blame of it. It is a heavy blame, a weighty guilt; but thou shalt not get another's back in all the creation to lay it on; and shift it off thy own. They that comply may bless God; they that do not may thank themselves. The cause is from themselves.

2. Thou shalt bear the loss of it, the loss of what thou scornest, the loss of grace, the favour of God, the loss of heaven. Thy blood shall be on thine own head. The scorning of the call brings a heavy load of wrath; but thou alone shalt bear it: that is,

(1.) God that called thee shall not bear it, either blame or loss. A man's heart perverts his way now, and his heart fretteth against the Lord; and I cannot think that the hearts of the reprobates in hell will be more reconciled to this dispensation, Matth. xxv. 24, 25. But the Lord will throw the weight of it back on thee, and thou alone shalt bear it?



for though he was not obliged to give thee grace, yet he offered it to thee, and thou refused it.

(2.) His faithful servants that warned thee, and called thee to comply with the call of God, shall not bear it, Ezek. xxxiii. 9. Nay, every call of theirs, every sermon, exhortation, reproof, and warning, in public or private, shall turn it back on thyself. Every sigh, groan, waste of their strength, for warning thee, shall turn it upon thee with a witness: *And thou alone shalt bear it.* Nay,

(3.) They that had a hand in thy not complying shall not bear it. They that tempted thee to sin, thy graceless neighbours and companions, whose face thou shalt curse the day that ever thou sawest it, they shall not bear it. Even unfaithful ministers, who either shall not warn thee, or by their unholy life harden thee, they shall not bear it, and thou wilt not find shelter under their wings. Nay, the devil himself, who goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, and does what he can to hinder thee, even he shall not bear it. For they do not force thee, but entice and tempt thee to sin; they lay the bait, but it is thy own fault that thou embracest it: they lay the stumbling-block, the occasion of sinning, in thy way; but thou art obliged to go by it, and hold off from it.

It is true they shall bear the weight of the hand they had in thy ruin; but alas! what is that to thee? what good will it do to thy poor soul? It is in this case as when one draws another into the water, and both are drowned together! alas! what is it to the man whom the other drew, that his companion is drowned himself too? that does not save his life, Ezek. xxxiii. 8. So they shall not bear it, but thou alone shalt bear it.

[1.] None shall bear it for thee, nor take the burden off thy back. The soul that sinneth, it dies. The sinner shall be the sufferer. They that refuse the surety of the Father's chusing, to bear the burden in their stead, shall not get another surety nor burden-bearer for them among angels or men. Nay, thou alone, and not another for thee, shalt bear it.

[2.] None shall bear it with thee, to ease thee of a part of the weight, Gal. vi. 5. There will be no relieving out of the flames, so there will be none that will be so kind as to bring a drop of water to cool the tongue in it, Ezek. xvi.

24. The whole weight shall lie upon thyself. Thou alone, and not another with thee, shalt bear it.

Wherefore consider what ye do. Be wise, sinners, and repent : For except ye repent, ye shall perish. The sound of the Lord's word goes away, and dies out as other sounds : but it liveth and abideth for ever in its efficacy, for the salvation or condemnation of those that hear it. So death and life are set before you, the blessing and the curse. *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.*

HOW THE SACRAMENTS BECOME EFFECTUAL MEANS OF  
SALVATION.

1 COR. xii. 13.—*For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free ; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

**I** COME now to handle the questions in the Caetchism concerning the sacraments. And the first of these is that touching the efficacy of these holy ordinances, which is one of the doctrines of this text, in which the apostle explains and confirms the doctrine of the mystical union betwixt Christ and his people, from the two sacraments.

I explained this text at large, when speaking of the mystical union from it\*. I shall only consider it now, in so far as it relates to the sacraments. And so there is,

1. The number of the sacraments of the new Testament. These are two, viz. baptism, 'we are all baptised,' &c. and the Lord's Supper, called here *drinking* ; the denomination being taken from the cup, as it is called *breaking of bread*, the name being taken from the bread therein used, Acts ii. 42. The former is the sacrament of our initiation into Christ, and union with him ; the other, of our nourishment in, and communion with him.

2. The efficacy of these sacraments. They are effectual to salvation in those in whom they have their effect, they being united to Christ into one body, and partaking more and more of his Spirit, in those ordinances respectively which so secures their salvation from sin, and wrath too.

3. To whom they are effectual. Not to all, but to believers only, *We all*, viz. who are members of Christ, ver. 11.

4. How they become effectual. Their efficacy is not from themselves, nor from the administrator, but from the Spirit of Christ. *By one Spirit are we all baptised*, &c. So their efficacy depends on the operation of the Holy Ghost in an by them ; and to this is presupposed the blessing of



Christ, since the Holy Spirit does not work with means un-blessed by Jesus Christ.

The purport of the text may be summed up in the following doctrine, viz.,

DOCT. 'The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them.'

Here let us consider,

I. That the sacraments are means of salvation.

II. Wherein lies the efficacy of the sacraments, or when may it be said that the sacraments are effectual means of salvation.

III. To whom are they effectual? or in whom have they their efficacy?

IV. Whence is their efficacy;

V. Conclude with some inferences.

I. I shall shew, that the sacraments are means of salvation. For clearing of this, we shall enquire,

1. What is that salvation which the sacraments are said to be means of? It is the whole salvation purchased by Jesus Christ for the elect; which consists of two parts. (1.) Salvation from sin, Matth. i. 21. 'He shall save his people from their sins.' Sensible sinners look on sin as the mortal disease of the soul; and to be saved from it, in the guilt and power thereof, they will account the great salvation, as indeed it is. (2.) Salvation from wrath, under which all must perish that partake not of Christ's salvation, 1 Thess. i. 10.—'Jesus which delivereth us from the wrath to come.' This is the warding off the blow of justice, the stroke of death eternal, from the neck of a poor creature. Both these parts make it a great salvation, the greatest that a poor sinner is capable of, Heb. ii. 3. And this salvation is so absolutely necessary, that it is no wonder to see a sinner inquiring after the means of it.

2. What a mean of salvation is? A mean has a relation to an end, and is that which is used to bring about the end. And a mean of salvation is any thing appointed of

God, in the use of which he carries on the salvation of his people. Thus all divine institutions in the church are means of salvation, that being the common end of them all, Matth. xxviii. 20. Among these the most eminent are, the word, sacraments, and prayer. Prayer has a relation to both, and is to be mixed with them. The difference betwixt the two former is,

That the word is the mean of conversion, and the sacraments the means of confirmation: so the word is the leading, and the sacraments are the subsequent means of salvation. The word is first to have its effect, then the sacraments have theirs on the soul, 1 Cor. iii. 5. with Rom. iv. 11.

Now, that the sacraments are such means of salvation appears,

1. From the Lord's appointing of them for that end to be used, Acts iii. 37, 38. 'Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' 1 Cor. x. 16. 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' And in that communion lies the safety of our souls for time and eternity.

2. From the saving effects which they have on the souls of God's people rightly using them. This is a sufficient testimony to their being such means, and proper means, Acts viii. 39. and ii. 42. &c.

II. *Quest.* Wherein lies the efficacy of the sacraments, or when may it be said, that the sacraments are effectual means of salvation?

The efficacy of a mean is its reaching the end for which it is appointed. If it fall short of that, it is ineffectual. The efficacy of a reproof lies in its reforming the party, and of meat in its nourishing the body. Now, the end of the sacraments being to represent, seal, and apply, Christ and his benefits to the soul, the efficacy of the sacraments lies in their

reaching these ends ; and then are they effectual, when they not only represent, but seal and apply, Christ and his benefits to the receiver, Rom. iv. 11. 1 Cor. xii. 13. 1 Pet. iii. 21. In a word, it lies in effectual obsignation and application of Christ and his benefits. And when they reach not these ends, they are not effectual.

Now, sometimes these effects of the sacraments are so lively and evident, that the soul perceives them, as the eunuch did, Acts viii. 38. when he went on his way rejoicing. Sometimes they are not discerned by the believer, though really they are wrought in him, as it was with the two disciples going to Emmaus, in another case, Luke xxiv. The following are signs of this efficacy.

*Sign 1.* The soul's cleaving more closely to the hope of the covenant than before, going out of itself more to Jesus Christ and his righteousness. This being the consequent of the sacraments, is an evidence of the obsignation, Phil. iii. 3.

*Sign 2.* More solid tenderness with respect to sin and duty, and longing to be rid of the body of sin and death. This is a sign of the application, Rom. vi. 4. & viii. 23. For nearness to Christ is the cause of distance from sin.

III. *Quest.* To whom are the sacraments effectual? or in whom have they their efficacy?

1. Not to all who partake of them. Simon was baptised, but continued in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, Acts viii. 13, 23. Men may partake of the Lord's supper unworthily. The apostle tells us how highly some were advanced in respect of sacramental privileges, with whom God was not well pleased, 1 Cor. x. 1,—5. And sad experience bears witness to this truth.

2. It is effectual to believing receivers, as to the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts viii. 37, 39. Mark xvi. 16. 'He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved.' It is with the sacraments as with the word, Heb. iv. 2. 'The word did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.' But this is not to exclude infants from the efficacy of baptism, since they are not capable of actual believing; but they having the spirit of faith abiding in them, baptism has its effect on them.



IV. *Quest.* Whence is the efficacy of the sacraments?

Negatively, 1. It is not from any virtue in themselves that these blessed effects are produced. God has put a power of nourishment in our meat, and of warming in our clothes; but no power of working grace either in the water of baptism, or the bread and wine in the Lord's supper. So the work wrought will never confer grace. The scriptures denies this power to the sacraments themselves, 1 Pet. iii. 21. 'Baptism doth now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' And many thousands are partakers of the sacraments, who yet never partake of the grace of God, as Simon. These pools will never prove healing, if there be not a moving of the waters from a superior cause.

2. It is not from the piety nor intention of the administrator neither. The holiness and best qualifications that ever were in a minister cannot make them effectual; let them burn and shine with light and life in the administration, they cannot make them effectual to one soul, 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7. 'I have planted (says Paul,) Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.' The efficacy of God's ordinances depends not on men, the administrators, either as to the making or marring their efficacy, Phil. i. 16, 17, 18. 'The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and therein do I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.' They may be employed in saving others, who are castaways themselves.

Positively, 1. The efficacy of the sacraments depends on the blessing of Christ, as the cause without which they could have no efficacy, for as much as the Spirit of Christ will not work by means unblessed, Matth. xv. 9. 'In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.' But Christ has blessed these ordinances first, and then the Spirit of Christ will not work by means unblessed, Matth. xv. 9. 'In vain do they worship me, teaching for

doctrines the commandments of men.' But Christ has blessed these ordinances, first, and then the Spirit works in them and by them. Now, this blessing of Christ is contained in the institution of the Sacraments; which comprehends two things, here called Christ's blessing.

(1.) A commanding authorising the use of these ordinances. (2.) A promise of benefit by them to the worthy receivers, Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. & xxvi. 26, &c.

2. It depends on the working of the Spirit in them and by them on the souls of the receivers, as the efficient cause, 1 Cor. xii. 13. The Spirit comes along with them, and renders them effectual to his own.

I shall shut up all with a few inferences.

*Inf.* 1. Hence learn to prize the sacraments, and behold the dreadful nature of the sin of slighting them. They are means of salvation, and therefore ought to be dear to all who would partake of salvation. Those who slight the means, undervalue the end, the great salvation. Did many amongst us consider this, they durst not so easily live without the word or sacraments, as they do, Luke vii. 30.

2. Rest not on the sacraments. They are but means, which are not effectual to every one that receives them. Many receive them both who never receive Christ; but for all that they wear Christ's badge, they work the devil's work. And it is not your receiving of them, but receiving benefit by them, that will be a good plea in the end, Luke xiii. 26, 27.

3. Look more to Christ's institution, and promise accompanying it, with respect to the sacraments, and less to men who have a commission to administer them, if ye would not mar your benefit by the ordinances. It is lamentable to think, that where the minister's commission cannot be quarrelled, and Christ's institution is observed, many nevertheless are so weak, as to be frighted from God's ordinance with scruples about the administrators, as if the spirit of God could not be expected to work with Christ's institutions, unless they be in the hands of such and such ministers. This absurd and sinful practice prevails too much at this day, as if the efficacy of the sacraments depended on the administrators.

4. *Lastly*, Be concerned for the working of the Spirit in

all ordinances, and particularly in the sacraments; for without that they can have no effect. When ye bring your children to baptism, and when ye come to the Lord's table, be concerned, and earnestly wrestle and pray for it. Let it be at these seasons the matter of your exercise, that the Lord may accompany these solemn ordinances with divine life and power unto you, and may excite your graces unto a vigorous and lively exercise, without which they will be utterly ineffectual to you.



THE NATURE OF THE SACRAMENTS.

Rom. iv. 11.—*And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had yet being uncircumcised.*

**T**HIS text discovers the nature of a sacrament, in the description the apostle gives us of circumcision, which Abraham received. In which consider,

1. The sacrament itself which the apostle treats of, circumcision, which was the initiating seal of the covenant under the Old Testament, and has been succeeded by baptism under the New.

2. The author of it. Abraham invented it not, but received it from the Lord, whose institution it was, Gen. xvii. 10; 'This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised\*;' even as the apostle

\* On this passage the author in his Critical Essay on Genesis, from which some extracts have been given above, p. 183, 212, thus comments: "This [is the design of] my covenant, which ye shall observe; between me, and you, and thy seed after thee:" That is, this is the sign between me and you, and thy seed, even the sign of the covenant. Between you; q. d. Between you, between you, i. e. you and every one of you, Abraham and his whole family, male and female, without exception, then in being; opposed to his seed after him. Thus all his are taken with him into the covenant, so far as to have a right to the seal of it.—That every male, be circumcised for you. The construction and sense of these words is, To be circumcised is the covenant (i. e. the sign



says, 1 Cor. xi. 23; 'I have received of the Lord, that, which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, &c.

3. The parts of it; an external sign, the cutting off of the foreskin; an invisible grace, the righteousness of faith.

4. The uses and ends of it: It was appointed to be a sign and a seal too, no nakedly signifying, but exhibiting and applying spiritual blessings.

*Lastly*, The subject of it: a believer, one to whom the righteousness of faith belonged. Such a person was Abraham, and such are all who truly believe in Christ.

The doctrine of this text is,

DOCT. 'A sacrament is an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.'

Here we are to consider,

I. The word *sacrament*.

II. The author of the sacrament.

III. The parts of a sacrament.

IV. Shew what is the sacramental union of these parts, or wherein it lies.

V. Who are the subjects of the sacraments, for whom they are appointed of God.

VI. What are the general uses and ends of the sacraments.

VII. Deduce some inferences.

thereof) which ye shall observe. Thus the great duty of the covenant is made, to be believing and depending on the promise of the covenant; wholly trusting on, and cleaving to, the righteousness of faith, whereof circumcision was the seal, Rom. iv. 11; the which is productive of all other duties. Further, these words bear this meaning, viz. That every male of you be circumcised for you: that is, in the name of the whole family, consisting of women as well as of men: that so you may be altogether one people in the bond of the covenant; compare Gen. xxxiv. 15, 22; And thus there appears a twofold reason, why our Lord Jesus Christ was circumcised: (1.) That it might be to him a seal of the promises mentioned, Gen. xvii. 4,—8; (2.) Because he was the head, and so the most noble part, of that one people embodied with him, in the covenant of grace, for whom he received the promises.

1. Let us consider the word *sacrament*. Of which two things are to be noted. (1.) That it properly signifies a military oath, an oath taken by soldiers, whereby they bound themselves solemnly to their prince or general, to obey orders, and not to desert their colours. And some say this oath was mutual. (2.) That it is not a scripture-word? not being used in any of the two languages in which the scripture was written, but a Latin word originally. But the church has made use of it to signify those ordinances which are the signs and seals of the covenant of grace; and that warrantably, because the things thereby signified are found in scripture, though not the word itself. For by the sacraments we are obliged to the spiritual warfare under the conduct of Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, to whom we engage ourselves by them, and he also engages himself to us for our salvation.

II. The author of the sacraments is the Lord Jesus Christ, as King and head of his church. Man neither made nor can make a sacrament, but the Lord only. For, (1.) He only is the Author of the word of promise, and of the covenant: who then but he can make the seals thereof; (2.) The sacraments are a part of religious worship, which belongs only to God to appoint, Matth. xv. 8; The Lord Jesus is the Author of them, by his instituting of them. They are instituted by himself, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; 'Go ye and teach all nations (says he to his disciples), baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,' 1 Cor. xi. 23; 'I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread,' &c. It is the word of institution that makes the sacrament, which consists of a command to use the rite, and a promise of grace annexed to the right use of it.

III. Let us consider the parts of a sacrament. These are two.

1. An outward and sensible sign used according to Christ's own appointment, which is something that we can

see with our eyes, or perceive by our bodily senses. These are of two sorts. (1.) Signifying things. Such are the water in baptism, and the bread and wine in the Lord's supper. (2.) Signifying actions; for the sacramental actions; being significant, as well as the things, are signs, and sensible signs, which we may see with our eyes. Such are the sprinkling of the water in baptism, and the breaking, giving, and receiving, of the bread and wine in the Lord's supper.

I say, used according to Christ's appointment; and therefore these same things and actions are not sacramental when otherwise used, as when water is sprinkled, or bread broken, without those other circumstances appointed by Jesus Christ in these ordinances. For where there is no divine institution, there is no sacrament.

2. An inward and spiritual grace thereby signified, Matth. iii. 11; 'I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me, is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire,' 1 Pet. iii. 21; 'The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,' Rom. ii. 28, 29; 'For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.' The signs are earthly, to be perceived with the bodily eyes; the thing signified heavenly, to be perceived only by faith. The former tends to the body, the latter to the soul. The one is received corporally, the other spiritually.

The thing signified by the sacramental signs is Jesus Christ himself with all his saving benefits, Rom. vi. 3; 1 Cor. xi. 24; 'This is my body,' &c. Not Christ's benefits without himself; for as there is no washing with water, without application of the water itself, and no nourishment by bread and wine, without eating and drinking of it; so there is no partaking of Christ's benefits without partaking of himself, Heb. iii. 14. Rom. viii. 32.



So unbelievers can have no saving benefit by the sacraments. Christ himself without his saving benefits; for Christ himself is the kernel of the sacraments; and wherever he comes, he brings all saving benefits along with him, Rom. viii. 32. even the purchase of his death.

The sum of these saving benefits ye have in that word, 1 Cor. i. 30. 'Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;' which comprehends all that is necessary for the cure of the case of any poor sinner.

IV. I proceed to shew, what is the sacramental union of these parts, or wherein it doth lie. There is an union of the parts of the sacraments, and without it they could not be accounted parts of the sacraments. It is by virtue of the union betwixt the signs and the signified, that the one gets the name of the other, Gen. xvii. 10. 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25. 'This is my body, This cup is the new testament in my blood:' yea, and the effects of the one are ascribed to the other, Tit. iii. 5. 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' Now, this is not a natural or local union; for in respect of place they are as far distant as heaven and earth: but it is a relative union, consisting in that spiritual relation that is between the sign and the thing signified, made by virtue of Christ's institution, whereby the signs signify or represent, seal, and exhibit to worthy receivers the thing signified.

V. I come to shew, who are the subjects of the sacraments for whom they are appointed of God. They are those, and those only, who are within the covenant, Rom. xv. 8. 'Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.' Exod. xii. 48. 'When a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.' For the seals of the covenant can belong to none but those

who are in it. So they have a right to them before God who are savingly within the covenant, and those a right before the church who are in it by a credible profession. Believers and their seed have a right to baptism; but only Christians come to years have a right to the Lord's supper, 1 Cor. xi. 28. But let a man examine himself, &c.

VI. *Lastly*, I come to shew, what are the general uses and ends of the sacraments. The principal uses and ends are threefold.

1. To be holy signs to signify and represent Christ and his benefits to the believer, to be discerned by faith, Rom. iv. 11. There is a fitness in them for this end, there being a plain resemblance betwixt the signs and the thing signified; whereby the signs do bring into their minds, and do clearly represent to a spiritual discerner the thing signified. And thus they strengthen faith, and all other graces in a believer; as seeing helps believing.

2. To be Heaven's public seals to seal the covenant. Rom. iv. 11. It is by them that God solemnly ratifies and confirms the covenant with believers. The covenant is held out in the word to be embraced by all to whom it comes: by believing we enter into the covenant; by the sacraments God declares it to be a bargain, as one does by subscribing a contract, and sealing it. And thus also they strengthen faith and all other graces; and oblige the believer to obedience, as one in covenant with God, Rom. vi. 3.

3. To be means of applying and exhibiting Christ and his benefits to the believer, 1 Cor. xi. 24. So that with the sacramental signs, in the right use of them, is joined the possession and actual enjoyment of the thing signified: 'This is my body, take eat.' As one is put in possession of houses or lands, by earth and stone given them, according to law, upon a disposition: so is the believer made partaker of Christ, and solemnly put in possession of all his saving benefits, by these means. The less principal end of the sacraments is to be badges of our Christian profession, to distinguish men from those that are without the church, Eph. ii. 11, 12. 'Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called un-

circumcision, by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.'

I shall conclude this discourse with some inferences.

*Inf.* 1. Great is the privilege of the covenant, and the benefits thereof, which God has thus appointed to be sealed. Seals are not used in small matters, but in those of great importance; how great then must those be which heaven seals?

2. Our gracious God has shewn great kindness to, and concern for the welfare and comfort of poor sinners coming to him through his Son. Though his word be firmer than heaven and earth, he remembers our frame, that we are guilty, and therefore fearful and suspicious creatures; and, for our ease, that we may the better trust him, has appointed seals of his benefits promised in his covenant.

3. Great is the sin of slighting the sacraments, and neglecting to partake of them. God appended seals to the covenant of works, viz. the tree of life, and that of the knowledge of good and evil. He also appointed seals to the covenant of grace, under the old dispensation, and under the new too. So divine wisdom has seen them always necessary. What an affront to the wisdom and kindness of God, and his covenant, must the slighting of them then be?

4. *Lastly*, Great is the sin of abusing and profaning the sacraments, 1 Cor. xi. 27. 'Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.' The unconverted profane the seals of heaven by setting them to a blank, where there is no covenant. The saints in a dead and sleepy frame do also profane them, while they are in no capacity to discern what they are appointed to represent, seal, and apply. O then use the sacraments in faith, according to Christ's institution, and seek his blessing upon them, that the benefits thereby sealed may become effectually yours.



THE NUMBER OF THE SACRAMENTS, AND THE NATURE OF  
BAPTISM.

1 COR. xii. 13.—*For by one Spirit we are all baptised—and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

MATTH. xxviii. 19.—*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

THE first of these texts, as before explained, holds out the number of the sacraments of the New Testament; and from thence we may draw this doctrine, viz.

DOCT. ‘The sacraments of the New Testament are, baptism, and the Lord’s supper.

That this, and only this, is the number of the sacraments, we have the following evidences.

1. These were instituted by the Lord Jesus, and no more, Matth. xxviii. 19. and xxvi. 26—28. No other bear the stamp of divine institution. And none can shew any other holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.

2. These two fully answer the necessities of the saints in the case of sacraments. Two witnesses are sufficient to one deed, and the great deed and grant of the covenant are sufficiently witnessed unto by these. What more is there for God’s elect to expect in this world, but these two things, that they receive life and nourishment, that they be taken into the covenant, and kept in it? Baptism is the sign of the one, and the Lord’s supper of the other. The

one is the sacrament of our ingrafting into Christ, and the other of our nourishment in him. And there is no special grace whatsoever, but what is signified and sealed by them.

3. The same was the number and nature of the ordinary sacraments of the Old Testament. They were no more but circumcision and the passover. And plain it is, that the New Testament dispensation is not more full of external rites and ceremonies than the Old one was. So that the Papists seven sacraments compared with the two Jewish ones, must needs shew Popery to be vastly distant from the simplicity of the gospel. Circumcision was the initiating sacrament then, as baptism is now, signifying the putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh, Col. ii. 11; as baptism the washing of them away, Acts xxii. 16; the passover signifying Christ crucified, 1 Cor. v. 7; as the sacrament of the supper also, Matth. xxvi. 26. First they were to be circumcised, and afterwards to keep the passover; and so first to be baptised, and afterwards to communicate in the Lord's supper, but no otherwise. Circumcision was never reiterated, but the passover frequently.

4. *Lastly*, As the apostle, in our text, makes these two the bonds of Christian communion, and no more; so he reduces the extraordinary Jewish sacraments, in their uses and ends, to those of our two sacraments. The being under the cloud, and passing through the Red Sea, he calls their being baptised, 1 Cor. x. 2. Their eating of the manna, and drinking the water of the rock, he calls their eating of the same spiritual meat, and drinking the same spiritual drink, as we do in the Lord's supper, ver. 3, 4.

From this point I shall draw a few inferences,

*Inf.* 1. Good and gracious is our God to his church and people, under the gospel in a special manner, who has instituted two, and but two sacraments, and these easy and clear. Here we have enough for the confirmation of our faith of the promises; and we have no reason to say we are under a heavy yoke. Here none of our blood is to be shed, but Christ's blood is most clearly represented as shed for us.

2. The five sacraments which the Papists have added to

our Lord's two, are but bastard sacraments, not the badges of Christ, but of Antichrist. These are, confirmation, penance, orders, marriage, and extreme unction.

*Confirmation* is the bishop's anointing of the baptised with chrism in the forehead, in the form of a cross, with this form of words, 'I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.' This has no manner of divine institution, nor is it at all to be found in the scriptures; and derogates from the sacrament of baptism.

*Penance* is repentance, discovering itself by external evidences. The matter of this pretended sacrament, they say, lies in contrition of heart, auricular confession, and satisfaction; the form of it in absolution by the priest, as a judge, pardoning their sin, not ministerially, only declaring it. But here is no visible sign at all, necessary to contradict and distinguish the sacramental signs from the word. No sign at all is administered to the penitent; no promise annexed to a sensible sign here: therefore no sacrament. Besides, auricular confession is not instituted at all by the Lord. And judicial pardon is blasphemous, ministerial declaration of pardon being only competent to ministers, John xx. 23.

*Orders* is the ordination of church-officers; which is instituted, but not to be a sacrament, it having no promise of saving grace annexed to it. 1 Tim. iv. 14. speaks not of saving grace, but of the official gift, viz. authority to preach.

*Matrimony* has nothing of a sacrament in it, since it has no visible sign appointed by Christ, no promise of saving grace annexed to it, and is common to all the world as well as the church. It is misgrounded on Eph. v. 32. where their corrupt translation reads *a great sacrament*.

*Extreme unction* is the priest's anointing the eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, reins, and feet of a person thought to be at the point of death, with olive-oil, consecrated by a bishop, using these words, 'By this holy oil, and his tender mercy, God forgive thee all thy sins.' It is built on Jam. v. 14. where the miraculous cure of diseases is spoke of.

3. See the bent of corrupt nature in meddling with



God's institutions, the abominations of Popery, and the great mercy of our deliverance from it. We can never be enough thankful to God for the reformation from that grand apostasy, idolatry, and superstition. We ought to hold firmly what we have attained, and stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, that we be not again entangled with any yoke of bondage. Let us steadfastly adhere to all the ordinances and institutions of our Lord Jesus Christ, and vigorously oppose, in our respective stations and places, all deviations from the same, from whatever quarter they may come, or under whatever specious pretexts they may be introduced or recommended. To the law and to the testimony let us bring them; and receive and practise nothing in the worship and service of God, but what is enforced with a *Thus saith the Lord*. And let us ever remember the extreme danger of all usages and innovations not contained in or authorised by the written word; and therefore let us from the heart abhor them.

In the second text we have the institution of baptism. And herein consider,

1. The ordinance itself; baptising in the name of the holy blessed Trinity. This is expressly instituted by Jesus Christ: *Go ye therefore, and baptise, &c.*

2. The administrators of baptism; ye apostles, and your successors, in 'teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded. And lo I am with you alway even to the end of the world.'

3. The subjects of baptism; all nations which are *taught Gr. disciplined*, made disciples of Christ. First, they are to be disciplined, and then baptised.

The doctrine of the text is,

Doctr. 'The sacrament of baptism is instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ.'

To open the nature of this sacrament, let us consider,

I. The signifying thing in it.

II. The signifying action,

III. The particular uses and ends of baptism.

IV. The subjects of baptism, or those to whom it is to be administered.

V. The efficacy of it.

VI. The necessity of it.

VII. Deduce a few inferences.

I. Let us consider the signifying thing in this sacrament. There is a fourfold baptism spoke of in scripture. (1.) The baptism of light, which is taken for the doctrine, Acts xviii. 25. (2.) The baptism of blood, which is martyrdom, Matth. xx. 22, 23. (3.) The baptism of the Spirit, which is the pouring out of the Spirit, Matth. iii. 11. (4.) The baptism of water, which is baptism properly so called. So

The signifying thing in baptism is water, Acts viii. 38, 39. Eph. v. 26. And there is no matter, as to the water, whether it be fountain water, or river-water, providing only it be pure clean water, Heb. x. 22. And it is an abominable practice of the Papists to add oil, salt, and spittle, to the water in baptism.

Here I shall shew,

1. What is signified by the water in baptism.

2. What is the resemblance betwixt water and the thing signified by it.

*First*, What is signified by the water in baptism?

1. The blood of Jesus Christ, Rev. i. 5.

2. The Spirit of Jesus Christ, Tit. iii. 5. Isa. xlv. 3.

*Secondly*, What is the resemblance betwixt these? There is a sweet resemblance betwixt water, and the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ; the due consideration whereof shews the excellency of the grace exhibited in baptism.

1. Water is a common thing, to be had freely by all those who will take it: it is what the poor as well as the rich have access to. So the blood and Spirit of Christ are free to all who will receive the same offered in the gospel, Isa. lv. 1. Christ is not a sealed and closed, but an opened fountain, for souls to wash in, Zech. xiii. 1. Cant. ii. 1. And however unclean one be, he is welcome to this water, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.

2. Water is a cleansing thing, taking out spots, stains, and defilement. The blood of Christ cleanses the defiled

conscience, Heb. ix. 14. The Spirit of Christ purifies the soul, removing filthy lusts that defile the soul, and so renewing and sanctifying it, Tit. iii. 5. And unless we be thus washed, we have no part in Christ.

3. Water is a refreshing thing, when one is thirsty, or scorched with heat. So is the blood of Christ, and the out-pouring of his Spirit, to the thirsty soul, scorched under the flames of wrath, John vi. 35.

4. Water is a fructifying virtue. So is Christ's blood and Spirit, making the barren soul fruitful in the fruits of holiness, Isa. xlv. 3, 4. The soul lies naturally, under the curse, and so can bring forth nothing but the briers and thorns of wickedness. But the blood of Christ sprinkled on the soul, changes the nature of the soul. The soul is naturally dead, and therefore must wither: the Spirit of Christ brings life, and makes the wilderness to blossom as the rose.

5. Water is most necessary, so necessary that we cannot live without it: so the blood and Spirit of Christ are absolutely necessary for our salvation, Heb. ix. 23. John xiii. 8.

6. *Lastly*, Water must be applied ere it can have its effect: so we must partake of Christ's blood and Spirit, ere our souls can be changed thereby, 1 Cor. i. 30.

II. Let us consider the signifying action in baptism. It is washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Here I shall shew,

1. How this washing with water is to be performed.
2. By whom it is to be performed, according to Christ's institution.
3. What is the meaning of the form of words used in baptism.

*First*, I am to shew how this washing with water is to be performed. The dipping of the person into the water is not necessary: but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person. The unlawfulness of dipping is not to be pretended, since it is not improbable that it was used by John Matth. iii. 6. and Philip, Acts viii. 38; but seems to have been used in the ancient



church, and in some places is used to this day. But baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water, as we do. (1.) Because the apostles, at least sometimes, seem to have baptised that way; as when three thousand were baptised in one day, Acts ii. 41; which can hardly be imagined to be done in so short a space of time by dipping; and when some were baptised in the night, as in the case of the Philippian jailor and his family, Acts xvi. 33. (2.) Because baptising in scripture is used for washing by infusion or sprinkling, as well as immersion, Mark vii. 4. Luke xi. 38. (3.) Because the thing signified by baptism is called *sprinkling*, and is represented thereby sufficiently, Heb. xii. 24. 1 Pet. i. 2. It is true, we are said to be buried in baptism, Rom. vi. 4; but even the sprinkling of the water, as well as dipping, represents that, according to the ancient way of burying, wherein they were not sunk into the earth, but laid on the ground, and the mold cast over them. Besides that in some cases dipping might endanger the life of the baptised, especially in our cold countries.

*Secondly*, I shall shew by whom baptism is to be performed, according to Christ's institution. By a minister of the gospel lawfully called thereto. For to them only belongs the administration of baptism, to whom it belongs to preach the word, our Lord Jesus having knit these together in the institution, Matth. xxviii. 19. They are the stewards of the mysteries of God, 1 Cor. iv. 1; into which office none can thrust himself with a good conscience, who is not called thereto. And it is the perverse opinion of the absolute necessity of baptism, that makes the Papists and others admit others, even women to baptise in case of necessity.

*Thirdly*, I shall next shew what is the meaning of the form of words used in baptism. It denotes baptism to be administered by virtue of the authority of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but especially that one is baptised into the profession, faith, and obedience of the holy Trinity, for the Greek *en* signifies *into the name*. And it is *name*, not *names*. to shew the Unity of the Godhead in the Trinity of persons.

III. I proceed to shew what are the particular uses and ends of baptism. Besides the general uses and ends of the

sacraments, which are common to baptism and the Lord's supper, the particular uses and ends of baptism are these.

1. To be a rite of solemn admission into the visible church, Matth. xxviii. 19. 1 Cor. xii. 13; and so to the visible church privileges, Rom. xi. 17. It supposes the party to have a right to these privileges before, and does not make them members of the visible church, but admits them solemnly thereto. And therefore it is neither to be called nor accounted christening, i. e. making them Christians: for the infants of believing parents are born within the covenant, and so are Christians and visible church members; and by baptism this right of theirs is acknowledged, and they are solemnly admitted to the privileges of church-membership.

2. To signify and seal to the party saving privileges and benefits for his eternal salvation, which it actually doth in all those to whom it is effectual, though it is not effectual to all. These benefits are,

(1.) Ingrafting into Christ, or union with him, Gal. iii. 27. We are naturally branches of the old Adam, from whom we can derive nothing but sin and the curse. Christ the second Adam is the true vine into which we are ingrafted, or to whom we are united, John xv. 5. The Spirit is the ingrafter, who, by the knife of the law cuts us off from the old stock, Gal. ii. 19. and puts us into Christ, winding us up with the band of the covenant of grace, and causing us to knit with him by faith, Eph. iii. 17. This is signified and sealed by baptism, while so Christ does solemnly take possession of us, being baptised in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

(2.) Partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace. These benefits signified and sealed by baptism are,

[1.] Remission of sins by virtue of the blood of Christ, Mark i. 4. That as the water washes away the stains of the body, so the blood of Christ, washeth off guilt; and God, for the sake of his Son, forgives sin. So the apostle prescribes it for the ease of the troubled souls who were pricked and awakened by his sermon, Acts ii. 37, 38. 'Repent and be baptised every one of you (says he), in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins,' that so they might be assured of pardon.

[2.] Adoption into the family of God, Gal. iii. 26, 27. We are by nature out of God's family: but here God's name is called upon us, and we are visibly taken into the visible family of God; and having his Spirit dwelling in us, we are really taken into the family; which is signified and sealed by baptism.

[3.] Regeneration by the Spirit of Christ, signified by water, Tit. iii. 5. The Spirit of Christ in regeneration worketh like water, John iii. 5. cleansing the soul from its impurities and making it holy. This is necessary to our salvation, since no unclean thing can enter the New Jerusalem; and is signified and sealed by baptism.

(4.) Resurrection unto life eternal out of the grave by the same Spirit, Rom. viii. 11. That baptism has an eye to this, appears from 1 Cor. xv. 29. 'Else what shall they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not?' And it is represented by the water's going off the baptised, though more lively by the coming up out of it in dipping.

3. To signify and seal our engagement to be the Lord's, to be his only, wholly and for ever, Rom. vi. 4. It is a dedicating ordinance, wherein the party baptised is solemnly given up to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. His ear is bored, that he may be the Lord's servant for ever. He is listed under Christ's banner, to fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh. He renounces sin and Satan, these his old masters, as being dead to sin, that he may live in newness of life. And, in a word, it is a declared acceptance of God's covenant offered in the gospel.

IV. I come to shew, who are the subjects of baptism, those to whom baptism is to be administered. 'Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him; but the infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptised.'

Negatively, (1.) Not any inanimate things, as bells, which the Papists do thereby horribly profaning the seal of God's covenant. (2.) Nor yet infidels, who are without the visible church, and so strangers from the covenants of promise, who therefore can have no right to the seals, while they continue so, Eph. ii. 12.



Positively, All those, and those only, who are within the covenant, without distinction of nation, sex, or age. This is clear from the institution, of discipling all nations, and then baptising them. So whosoever they are who come into Christ's school, and are members of his visible church, are to be baptised, and none other. So,

1. Those who are of age, whatever they have been before, are to be baptised, upon their making a credible profession of their faith in Christ, and obedience to him : Because in that case the church is to look upon them as within the covenant. It is true, if they be not sincere believers, they have not a right to it before God; but their credible profession gives them a right to it before the church. Both of these are plain in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts viii. 37, 38; and Peter's hearers, Acts ii. 38.

2. The infants of believing parents, or visible church-members, one or both, are to be baptised: Because they are to be looked upon as within the covenant, since it runs so, 'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed,' &c. Gen. xvii. 7; Acts ii. 38, 39; And the benefits of the covenant belong to them, Matth. xix. 14; who then can forbid them the seal of the covenant? They were circumcised under the Old Testament, and the grace of God is not narrower now than it was then. They are comprehended under the institution, as making a part of nations, and are reckoned disciples, Acts xv. 10; And so the apostles baptised whole families, as Paul and Silas that of the gaoler, Acts xvi. 15, 33; and Paul that of Stephanas, 1 Cor. i. 16; And it is sufficient if one of the parents be a church-member, though the other be not, 1 Cor. vii. 14.

V. As to the efficacy of baptism, we may observe three things.

1. It consists in effectual sealing and applying Christ and his benefits to the baptised party, 1 Pet. iii. 21.

2. It is not effectual to all that receive it, as appears from the case of Simon, who after baptism remained in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, Acts viii. 13, 23; And this the unholy lives of many baptised in their infancy do testify.

3. It is not tied to the moment of administration, but

though not effectual in the time it is administered, may afterwards be effectual, through the working of the Spirit, John iii. 5, 8.

VI. As to the necessity of baptism, two things are to be observed.

1. It is not of absolute necessity to salvation as if the simple want thereof could hinder salvation; for God has not made baptism and faith equally necessary, Mark xvi. 16; And circumcision was not to be administered before the eighth day, Gen. xvii. 12\* ;' though there is no reason to doubt but some Jewish infants died before that time.

2. It is necessary by divine precept, as an instituted means of salvation. So that the contempt of it is a sin, and a great one, that will damn men, unless it be pardoned through the blood of Christ, Luke vii. 30; but this contempt cannot be ascribed to the child, before he comes to the years

\* The words are, " And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations." The author, in his manuscript on Genesis, renders the words thus: " And one going on eight days; he shall be circumcised for you; [even] every male; throughout your generations." That is, should one once be going on eight days, then he is bound by this law. Before he is of that age, he is not obliged to be circumcised: but on the eighth day he falls under the obligation to it, which still abides on him thereafter, during his uncircumcision. Compare ver. 14. And every male was to be circumcised for the family of Abraham, or in their name; see the note above, p. 283; and this throughout their generations successively, during the whole time of the being of circumcision as a divine ordinance. By this constitution there would be almost a continual renewing of the seal of the covenant among them; and that respecting not only the party circumcised at the time, but the whole body of the people, men and women. Whence it appears, what ground there is for Christians improving the administration of baptism to infants, time after time for the confirming of their own faith of the covenant. Compare with this phrase, circumcised for you, 1 Cor. xv. 29; baptised for the dead, Baptism, as often as it is administered according to Christ's institution, doth by his appointment seal the whole benefits of the covenant of grace, not only to the party receiver, but the whole of the body, within the covenant: the resurrection of the dead saints is a special benefit of the covenant, in virtue of it secured to them, even as remission of sin to the living, Mat. xxii. 31, 32; and the church militant and triumphant are but one body, all of them together being embodied in one covenant, Eph. iv. 4. 1 Cor. xii. 13; therefore baptism being administered to the faithful for this end, is vain, if there is no resurrection of the dead.

of discretion, and so cannot involve him in guilt; but unto the parents. So that Gen. xvii. 14; is to be understood of the child come to years\*.

A few inferences shall conclude this subject.

*Inf.* 1. Baptism is not to be administered to any person oftener than one. This is plain from the nature of the ordinance, Tit. iii. 5; we being but once ingrafted and regenerated.

2. Improve your baptism agreeable to the nature of it, and the ends of its institution. It is a gross neglect, that we are not often putting the question to ourselves, Into what was I baptised? Alas! many make no more use of their baptism rightly, than if they had never been baptised. Though ye were but once baptised, ye should be improving it all your life long, and particularly when you see others baptised.

(1.) Improve it for raising your hearts in thankfulness to

\* The words are, "And the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." The author, in the aforementioned work, thus translates and comments on the words: "And as for an uncircumcised one a male; who shall not crop, even the flesh of his foreskin;" i. e. a male, whether of Abraham's own seed, or born in the house, or acquired by money; who being come to the years of discretion (the Jews say the thirteenth year of his age), his circumcision having been neglected by his parents or master, shall not then see to his own circumcision, effectually, he shall be liable as follows.—"Then in that case that person, even that, shall be cut off from his people whatsoever," i. e. Such a one is guilty, and of whatsoever people he be, he shall be cut off from his people, by death; which he shall be put to, for his contempt, whether by the hand of the magistrate, or otherwise.—Even my covenant he hath made void, i. e. He hath thrown it away, or trampled it under foot, as refuse. The punishment to be inflicted is not more severe than the crime is atrocious. The criminal had free access to the covenant of grace, with the righteousness of faith, and all the other benefits of it; whether he was of Abraham's seed or not; being incorporated with Abraham's family: he was under the obligation of a law to receive the covenant personally to enter into it; and in token thereof, to receive the seal of it, ver. 11, 12, 13; he is come to years, and capable of judging for himself; and the hazard of refusing is told him. But he contemns the seal; he will not circumcise himself. Thus he makes void the covenant; making the device of heaven for salvation useless and of none effect to himself by his obstinacy: he contemptuously throws it away from him as empty husks, dregs, and refuse, in which there is no force nor energy, no sap, no flavour; and treads it under foot. Comp. Heb. x. 28, 29.



God, that ever ye were sealed with the seal of God's covenant, and had his name called on you, while many in the world are utter strangers to the covenants of promise.

(2.) Improve it for your strengthening against temptation, considering that you are the Lord's, not your own, and are under the most solemn and awful engagement to God, to resist the devil, the world, and the flesh; and also drawing strength from the death, and resurrection of Christ, into whom ye were baptised, Rom. vi. 4.

(3.) Improve it for your humiliation under your sins and miscarriages, considering them as sins against the grace of baptism, and your engagements to God therein; remembering that sins after solemn engagements to the contrary, are highly offensive to God, and attended with more aggravating circumstances, than if you had never been baptised, and such solemn engagements entered into by you. The vows of God are upon you; break them not, and go not about after vows to make inquiry.

(4.) Improve your baptism to the strengthening of your faith and confidence in Jesus Christ, especially in downcastings under a sense of guilt; for it is a sign and seal of remission, adoption, &c. and so may answer the question to an exercised soul, How can I be put among the children?

(5.) Improve it to the vigorous exercise of, and growth in holiness, since thereby ye are engaged to newness of life, as ye are raised from the dead, Rom. vi. 4. Were ye dedicated unto God, does not that say ye should be holy in heart, lip, and life? As God is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of life and conversation; remembering that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

(6.) *Lastly*, Improve it to the increase of brotherly love, even love to all the saints, who are all baptised into one body, 1 Cor. xii. 13; It is as unnatural for saints not to love one another, or to quarrel with one another, as it is for the members of the natural body to be at war with each other. Then love one another, as Christ hath loved you\*.

\* See more of this subject in the author's sermons on church-communion, first printed in 1737.

OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 COR. XI. 23, 24, 25.—*I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread ; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat : this is my body broken for you : this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner, also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

THESE words afford us the answer to that question, ‘ What is the sacrament of the Lord’s supper ? ’ and declare to us the nature of that holy ordinance which we are now in expectation of, and now falls to be explained ? For which we shall consider,

- I. The author of it.
- II. The signifying things in it.
- III. The signifying actions.
- IV. The uses and ends of it.

All these particulars are contained in the text and deserve a special consideration.

1. The author of this ordinance is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. It is not founded on man’s authority, but on his own authority, who is the only King and Head of his church, ver. 23. *I have received of the Lord Jesus, &c.* which points out a twofold excellency in it. (1.) A character of divine authority upon it. The elements and actions, though they be mean in themselves, yet have a majesty in them to a spiritual eye, as bearing Christ’s stamp on them, and being heaven’s broad seal to the covenant. (2.) A holiness in it ; it is a holy ordinance, as appointed

by the holy Jesus. The elements, though in themselves common things, are relatively holy, as appointed to represent, seal, and apply Christ and his benefits.

Here I shall shew,

1. When Christ instituted this sacrament.
2. For what time it is to continue.
3. What the words of institution contain.

*First*, When did Christ institute this sacrament? *The same night in which he was betrayed*, ver. 23. Yet this does not bind us to that time rather than to another, because that was an accidental circumstance, arising from something peculiar to the first institution and administration. For it could not be sooner, in regard it behoved to be after the passover, which was to be killed in the evening, Exod. xii. 6. and eaten that night, ver. 8. which was to be abrogated by this new institution. It could not be later, because quickly after he fell into his enemies hands. The time of its institution teaches us four things.

1. The most tender care and concern our Lord had and has for his people's welfare and comfort, providing for these just while he was to launch forth into the sea of wrath. Admirable love and tenderness indeed!

2. That it is Christ's dying love-token to his friends, and therefore to be highly prized, and duly improved.

3. That it is of special use to fit the Lord's people for a time of trouble and trial. Now, the disciples were to meet with a storm which they had never seen the like of; and he reserves therefore the best wine till now.

4. That it is of special use to fit his people for grappling with death; the which we may learn from his example.

*Secondly*, For what time is this sacrament to continue? I answer, Till he come again, and so it is to last to the end of the world. While he is absent, we must make use of it, as a memorial, ver. 25, 26.

*Thirdly*, What do the words of institution contain? They contain Christ's blessing; which comprehends two things. (1.) A command for the use of this sacrament. (2.) A promise of spiritual benefit by it to the worthy receivers, viz. that they shall partake of Christ's body and blood in



the right use of it, ver. 24, 25. *Take, eat: This is my body—This cup is the new Testament in my blood.*

II. I proceed to consider the signifying things, or outward elements. These are bread and wine. The bread, ordinary bread, without any determination of what grain it is made, nor whether leavened or unleavened. Our Lord took such bread as came to hand, and so may we without scruple, though decency is to be observed. The wine, as to the colour of it, is also indifferent; and whether a little mixed with water, or unmixed, is so too. Necessity and decency must regulate these things, the church being no otherwise tied by divine institution.

Here let us consider,

1. What is signified by the bread and wine.

2. The resemblance betwixt the signs and the things signified.

*First*, What is signified by the bread and wine? The body and blood of Christ, ver. 24, 25. even a whole Christ with all his benefits, forasmuch as the divine nature after the incarnation was never separated from the human, though the soul was separated from the body, and his precious blood from his flesh.

*Secondly*, The resemblance betwixt the signs and the things signified.

1. Consider the bread and wine separately.

1st, There is a resemblance betwixt the bread and Christ's body.

(1.) Bread is for nourishing of natural life: so is Christ's body for nourishment to the soul, John vi. 56. 'For (says he), my flesh is meat indeed.' There the hungry may feed, and be nourished and strengthened, to grow up unto eternal life.

(2.) Bread must be prepared ere it can be bread, or fit nourishment for us, the grain ground, and baked with the fire. So Christ was grinded betwixt the upper millstone of the Father's wrath, and the nether millstone of the malice of men and devils, and cast into the fiery furnace of justice, that he might be bread to our souls, Psal. xxii. 14.

(3.) Bread is a common and cheap provision; it is for the poor as well as the rich. Christ's salvation is the com-

mon salvation, Jude 3; free to all who will receive the same, Rev. xxii. 17.

(4.) Of all provision it is the most necessary. Nothing is so necessary for us as Christ; without him we die, we perish, we all perish, John vi. 53. 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.'

(5.) *Lastly*, It is a sort of food which healthy people will never loath. So is Christ ever sweet to the soul that feeds on him, though distempered souls loath the bread of life.

*2dly*, There is a resemblance betwixt wine and Christ's blood.

(1.) The wine is squeezed out of the grapes forcibly by the wine-press. Thus was Christ's blood squeezed out of his body, by the wine-press of the Father's wrath, that it might be drink to our souls.

(2.) Wine has a medicinal virtue, Luke x. 34. Christ's blood is the great medicine for the wounds of the soul. There are no wounds so deep, or so hopeless, but an application of Christ's blood will cleanse them, and heal them too.

(3.) Wine is refreshing and strengthening to the body, 1 Tim. v. 23. A draught of this spiritual drink, exhibited to us in the sacrament, and to be received by faith, would make the soul pressed with guilt, and a sense of wrath, to stir as a giant refreshed with wine, John vi. 55. 'My blood is drink indeed.'

(4.) *Lastly*, It is of a cheering virtue, Prov. xxxi. 6. The blood of Christ is that whereof those who are of sorrowful spirits, by reason of guilt, may drink by faith, and forget their sorrow, 1 Pet. i. 8.

2. Consider the bread and wine conjunctly, set before us in the sacrament. There is a threefold resemblance.

*1st*, There is both meat and drink, bread and wine, in the sacrament. In Jesus Christ we have a full feast for our souls, John vi. 55. 'My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.' There is a fulness in him for all our wants, a fulness of merit and of Spirit.

*2.* The bread and wine are separate in the sacrament. So was Christ's blood separated from his body on the cross

for us. Many vents were made in that blessed body by the nails and spear, through which that blood might gush out, for the redemption of an elect world.

3. The bread must be eaten, and the wine drunk, or they will not nourish. So Christ's body and blood must be by faith eaten and drunk, or it will not profit us to our salvation. It is union with him by faith that makes us partakers of his benefits.

III. Let us consider the signifying actions in this sacrament.

*First*, There are some signifying actions of the administrator about these elements, according to Christ's institution, which, being sacramental, are also significant.

1. Taking of the bread, and the cup into which the wine has been poured out, taking them into his hand, ver. 23, 24, 25. Nothing is more distinctly mentioned than this, Matth. xxvi. 26, 27. 'Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.' Whence it is evident, that it is taken to be consecrated. And this represents the Father's chusing and designing the Son to be Mediator, Psal. lxxxix. 19. 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.' So in this action we may see, (1.) Man perishing for want of spiritual food, Adam and all his posterity starving in their souls, and so their case crying for bread. (2.) God in his eternal love destinating bread for a starving world. (3.) The Son of God, as the party on whom the lot fell, to be bread for them. Behold the bread the Father took, Isaiah xlii. 1. 'Behold my servant whom I uphold.' He was God's choice, and shall he not be ours?

2. Consecrating of the elements, ver. 24, 25. The consecrating of the bread and wine apart is reckoned to be an accidental circumstance in the first administration, agreeable to the custom of the country where it was done, not obliging us, whose custom it is to bless all together, more than unleavened bread, &c. Nor does there appear any mystery further in the former than the latter.



Here consider,

(1.) How the elements are consecrated. By the word of institution, thanksgiving and prayer, they are consecrated, or set apart from common use, ver. 23, 24, 25. Our Lord Christ had power of himself to institute the ordinance, and did so, and blessed it, and solemnly gave thanks over it. The institution stands in the word, which therefore we read on that occasion, and, according to his example, pray over it, with thanksgiving. The Popish consecration, by muttering over these words, *This is my body*, hit not the mark; for these words, *This is my body*, were uttered by our Lord after the consecration.

(2-) What is the effect of the consecration on the elements? Not a real change of them into the body and blood of Christ. This destroys the nature of a sacrament, leaving no sensible sign. It is contrary to the institution, where Christ's body was sitting at the table, and reached the disciples bread and wine. It is contrary to the doctrine of Christ's suffering once, his ascension, sitting at God's right hand, and coming again not till the last day. And so it is contrary to sense and reason.

Christ said indeed, *This is my body*, i. e. signifies my body, as the lamb is called the Lord's passover, Exod. xii. 11. It is by these words the Papists will have the bread changed into the real natural body of Christ. But these words suppose it to be Christ's body before, since a thing cannot be truly said to be what it is not. So it is no otherwise Christ's body, but sacramentally.

The true effect is a relative change on the elements, so that they are no more to be looked upon as common bread and wine, but the sacred symbols of Christ's body and blood. So they are changed in respect of their use, being set apart for this holy use.

(3) The signification of this sacramental action. It represents the Father's setting apart and consecrating his own Son to, and investing him in, the Mediatorial office. So Christ is said to be sealed, John vi. 27; sanctified and sent, chap. x. 36; and anointed to his office, Isa. lxi. 1. So in this a believer may see these three things. (1.) The Father calling Christ to the Mediatorial office, Heb. v. 4, 5; to do and to die for the perishing elect. (2.) The

Son's accepting of the call, though he knew how hard the work was, Psal. xl. 7. (3.) Christ completely furnished for all the ends of his mediation, actually entered on the office. The Father blessed him, and sent him on the work, and he goes about it, Isa. lxi. 1.

3. Breaking of the bread, ver. 24. This is an essential rite of this sacrament, it being sometimes called by this very name, Acts xx. 7. It signifies the breaking of Christ's body for us, and consequently the shedding of his blood. In the sacrament there is not a word of pouring out the wine, though no doubt it was done: for the shedding of Christ's blood is sufficiently represented by breaking of his body. His body was broken to the shedding of his blood in his circumcision, in his soul-sufferings to the sweating of blood, in the plucking off his hair, Isa. l. 6. in his scourging, John xix. 1. crowning with thorns, and being smitten on the so crowned head, and in his crucifixion. And these his sufferings point to all the rest.

4. Giving of the bread, and then the wine, to the communicants, ver. 24, 25. This signifies Christ's giving himself, with all his benefits, to the worthy receiver, which is really done in the right use of this sacrament. This is plain from the words, *Take, eat, &c.*

*Secondly,* There are signifying actions of the communicants.

1. Taking off the bread and wine with the hand, *ib.* This signifies their receiving of a whole Christ, as offered in the word, and exhibited in the sacrament, closing with him by faith.

2. Eating and drinking. The Papists destroy this last as to the people, with-holding the cup from them, contrary to Christ's express command, Matth. xxvi. 27. 'Drink ye all of it.' These actions signify their feeding spiritually on Christ's body and blood, and uniting with him by faith.

These solemn sacramental actions not being accompanied with the things signified, namely, the duties, make them a solemn mocking of God, which makes unworthy communicating so great a sin.

IV. I proceed to consider the particular uses and ends of

this sacrament. Besides the general ends of this sacrament, common to the other also, to wit, (1.) To be a signifying sign, (2.) A sealing sign, (3.) An exhibiting sign, of Christ, and his benefits to believers; the particular ends of it are,

1. To be a memorial of the death of Christ till he come again, ver. 24. And this is to be considered two ways. (1.) As a memorial of it before the world, 1 Cor. xi. 26. as Joshua set up the twelve stones. Hereby we keep up a standard for Christ, and openly avouch his dying, and our faith of it. (2.) As a memorial before our own eyes, to revive, quicken, and preserve the affectionate remembrance of his death in our own hearts. This respects Christ's honour and our duty.

2. To be a badge of and confirm our union and communion with Jesus Christ himself, 1 Cor. x. 16. What nearer union do we know on earth, than that betwixt us and our food, which incorporates with our substance? So this sacrament signifies, seals, and confirms our union and communion with Christ, as eating his flesh and drinking his blood. This respects our privilege.

3. To be a spiritual feast for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. *Take, eat, &c.* For therein believers are made partakers of his body and blood, since they are really exhibited in this ordinance to the faith of the believer. They partake of it not after a corporal and carnal manner, eating and drinking of that blessed body and blood with the mouths of their bodies, but spiritually and most really by faith. This respects our benefit.

4. *Lastly*, To be a public testimony of our communion with all saints, members of the same body, 1 Cor. x. 17. This respects the whole church of Christ, and the duties they owe to one another as members of the same body.

I shall now conclude this subject with an inference or two.

*Inf.* 1. Hence we may see the unparalleled goodness and bounty of a gracious God to his people, in covering a rich table for them in this wilderness, stored with the best meat and drink for their refreshment and nourishment in their pilgrimage-state, till they arrive at their Father's house in



the heavenly Canaan. With what an enlarged appetite ought they to come to and partake of this royal feast, designed only for those who are the King's friends! They should feed upon it in the exercise of faith, love, desire, wonder, and joy. They should welcome every opportunity that presents itself, to feast with their Redeemer, and give suitable reception to the entertainer, and the entertainment he provides.

2. This holy sacrament is children's bread. For none but gracious souls are capable of managing it to their own advantage. How shall they remember him who never knew him? declare their union with him, who are not divorced from their lusts and idols? eat his flesh and drink his blood, who have no appetite for spiritual meat and drink? honour him whom they are daily dishonouring by their profane lives and conversations? None but those who believe in Christ are fit guests for his table. Let all unbelievers be exhorted to receive and embrace Christ as their Saviour, to be clothed with the wedding-garment of his righteousness, and then they will be fit to sit at the King's table.

3. Prepare for this solemn ordinance, if God shall allow us the opportunity. Delay not a moment to give yourselves to the Lord, by receiving and embracing the Lord Jesus as your Saviour and Redeemer, and vouching him as such in this holy sacrament. Let the mortality\* and

\* This discourse was preached in April 1720, in which season a distemper as mortal as epidemical raged in the parish of Ettrick. All the author's family, himself only excepted, were seized with it: but, through the goodness of God, happily recovered. It is to this distemper that the author here alludes. And as a careful observance of the course of providence in general, with a singular dexterity in connecting particular providences, was one of the most distinguishing traits in this great man's character; so it was his invariable practice, to adapt his public preaching to the course of providence, and to make use of God's dispensations towards his own parish in particular, to back and enforce his exhortations to his flock. Add to this, that it was a practice of his, not unusual, to observe a congregational fast when any thing appeared uncommon in the course of providence, that his parishioners might be led to improve it properly; which, from his diary and the sermons then preached, still preserved, it appears, he did on the occasion alluded to in the inference. This fast was observed on the 27th of April 1720. And as the sermons then delivered

sickness that so generally prevails, excite you to be more vigorous than ever in preparing for this solemn occasion, as perhaps it may be the last many of us may partake of. O then let us prepare to keep the feast in due manner!

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OF THE WORTHY RECEIVING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 COR. XI. 28.—*But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

THESE words contain a mean for preventing of the great evil which men are apt to fall into with respect to the Lord's supper; and so for our purpose they offer two things to be considered.

1. An evil, a great evil, a heinous evil, which men must use means to prevent; that is, unworthy communicating. *But let a man examine himself, &c.* This looks back to the preceding verse, wherein the apostle had declared unworthy communicants to be 'guilty of Christ's body and blood.' *But* (says he, to prevent this, and that ye may worthily partake) *let a man examine himself, &c.*

2. The way to be taken to prevent unworthy communicating: *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, &c.* A man, every man to whom the gospel comes, and who has access to this ordinance, must examine

may be useful on like occasions, which are not unfrequent, they shall be inserted at the end of this volume. And the propriety of giving them a place in this work will appear from this consideration, That while the serious reader is employed in perusing a discourse treating of the nature of the Lord's supper, in which there is a lively representation of the death of Christ, our passover sacrificed for us, it will be a profitable exercise for him at the same time to be thinking of his own death, and to be so numbering his days, that he may apply his heart unto wisdom.

himself, as a judge does a matter of fact, or goldsmiths metals by the touch-stone, to discern what is true and what counterfeit. *And so let him eat; not, And then let him eat,* whatever case his soul be in; but let him follow out this duty till he find his soul in some fitness for that ordinance, *And so eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

The text affords this doctrine, viz.

Doct. 'It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience, lest coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves.'

Here let us consider,

- I. What worthiness to partake is.
- II. The duty of self-examination necessary for worthy receiving of the Lord's supper.
- III. The necessity of this self-examination.
- IV. Deduce an inference or two.

I. Let us consider what worthiness to partake is. And,

1. What is meant by it.

2. Wherein it consists.

*First,* Let us consider what is meant by worthiness to partake.

1. Not a legal worthiness, as if we could deserve it at the hands of God; for 'when we have done all those things which are commanded us, we must say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do,' Luke xvii. 10. Those who are that way worthy in their own eyes, are altogether unworthy: for building their acceptance with the Lord in that ordinance upon their own good qualifications, they shall meet with Simon's entertainment, Acts viii. 20. 'Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money;' for they run quite cross to the end of that ordinance, declaring in effect the death of Christ to be in vain as to them, Gal. ii. ult. 'For if righteousness come by the law, then is Christ dead in vain.'



2. But it is a gospel-meetness and fitness for that ordinance as we are to 'bring forth fruits meet for repentance,' Matth. iii. 8. so one communicates worthily, when he is fit for receiving that sacrament according to the rules of the gospel, comes to it in such a manner as Christ bids and welcomes his guests. And much of that lies in coming with a deep sense of our utter vileness and emptiness, Isa. lv. 1.

*Secondly*, Wherein does this worthiness to partake consist? I answer, In two things.

1. In habitual meetness for it, in respect of a gracious state. The soul in the black state of nature is utterly unfit for this ordinance, Psal. v. 5. 'The foolish shall not stand in thy sight, thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Such a soul is a dead soul, 'dead in trespasses and sins,' Eph. ii. 1. And a dead man is not fit for a feast nor a dead soul for the Lord's table, but rather to be buried out of his sight. And from the Lord's table such a one may be expected to come away twice dead.

2. In actual meetness, in respect of a gracious frame. In our addresses to God not only life, but liveliness, is requisite, Psal. lxxx. 18. A sleeping man is not fit for a feast neither; and therefore even a true believer may communicate unworthily, as some in the church of Corinth did, 1 Cor. xi. 30, 32. So it is necessary that we not only have oil in our vessels, but have our lamps burning if we would be fit, Cant. i. 12.

II. Let us consider the duty of self-examination necessary for worthy receiving of the Lord's supper. And here,

1. The rule or touchstone by which we must examine.

2. The matter we are to examine ourselves about.

*First*, Let us consider the rule or touchstone by which we must examine.

1. Beware of false ones. (1.) The common guise of the world. It is not enough that ye are like neighbour and other, aye and better than many, like the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11. Though an ape be liker a man than a dog is, yet the one is no more a man than the other. Though mere moralists and formalists are liker true Christians than openly profane ones are, yet the one are no more true

Christians than the others. (2.) One's being better than sometime before, 2 Cor. x. 12. One may be like Saul, who got another heart, but not the new heart, 1 Sam. x. 9. (3.) The letter of the law. So did the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11; and Paul before his conversion, Rom. vii. 9. (4.) The seen practice of the godly, which is but their outside, and so is but an unsafe rule, in regard you cannot see the principle, motives, and ends of their actions, which are great characteristics, whereby the sincere are distinguished from hypocrites.

2. The only true rule or touchstone in this case is the word of God, Isa. viii. 20. 'To the law and to the testimony,' &c. The Spirit of the Lord speaking in the scriptures is the supreme Judge of all questions in religion, whether relating to faith or practice; and the word itself is the rule by which the decision is made. God hath given us marks in the word, by which one may know whether he be in Christ or not, 2 Cor. v. 17; whether born of God or not, 1 John iii. 9; and the like.

*Secondly*, Let us consider the matter we are to examine ourselves about. The great thing to be inquired into and examined here, is the state of our souls before the Lord whether we be in Christ or not, regenerate or not, have true grace or not, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. This we should examine at all times with respect to death and eternity, because our eternal state depends on our being in a state of grace here. And this is to be examined in respect of the sacrament.

The reason is, This sacrament is not a converting, but a confirming ordinance, as baptism also is, Rom. iv. 11. It is a seal of the covenant, and so supposes the covenant entered into before by the party. It is appointed for nourishment, which presupposes life. And if it was not so, what need of self-examination? so let him come, not otherwise. It is the word that is the converting ordinance, not the sacrament, Rom. x. 17; and the nature of excommunication evinces this, 1 Cor. v. 13.

But more particularly, because there are some graces, namely, knowledge, faith, repentance, love, and new obedience, which in a particular manner are sacramental graces, these are to be examined. And,

FIRST, Our knowledge is to be examined, 1 Cor. xi. 29.

And here let us consider,

1. What is to be examined concerning our knowledge.
2. How this may be known.
3. The necessity of this.

*First*, What is to be examined concerning our knowledge.

1. The measure of it, whether competent or not, Hos. iv. 6. The nature of this ordinance is such, that it cannot be managed to spiritual advantage, but loss, without a competent measure of knowledge. And this not only ministers should inquire into, but people themselves, after all examination by ministers.

2. The quality of it, whether saving or not, 1 Cor. xiii.

1. There is a notional, idle, inefficacious knowledge of spiritual things, which leaves men still in their natural darkness, as to any saving uptaking of spiritual things: and therefore it cannot be sufficient to fit men for this ordinance.

*Secondly*, How may this be known?

1. Competency of knowledge. There may be an ignorance of several not fundamental points of religion, where yet there is a competency of knowledge for this ordinance. But there are two things necessary to it. (1.) An understanding in some measure of the fundamentals of religion, the nature of God, the persons of the Trinity, the fall of man, with the sinfulness and misery of our natural state, the natures and person of Christ, and the way of redemption and salvation by him, our need of him, and of faith as the way how we come to be interested in him. There must be some sensible knowledge of these things, that men be not like parrots, who may be taught to say the creed, without understanding a word of what they say. (2.) An understanding of the nature, use, and ends of this ordinance in particular. Without such a knowledge, there can be no discerning of the Lord's body; for what spiritual thing can one perceive in the ordinance, the nature of which he is ignorant of?

2. Saving knowledge may be discerned by these two marks. (1.) When, by an inward teaching, one is made so to see the truth of man's lost state, and his absolute need of Christ, as to be brought out of himself to Jesus Christ wholly for his whole salvation, John vi. 45; 'It is written



in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' Here are two things, in one of which, if not both, the knowledge of the most refined hypocrite fails. (2.) When it is influential on the life for sanctification, Matth. xi. 29. While notional knowledge leaves always the heart unhumbled, and the life unhallowed, saving knowledge humbles the heart, as it did in the case of Job, chap. xlii. 5, 6. 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes;' and it sanctifies the conversation, Jer. xxii. 15, 16. 'Did not thy Father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy: then it was well with him: was not ~~this~~ to know me? saith the Lord.'

*Thirdly*, Let us consider the necessity of this knowledge.

1. Ignorant persons are utterly unfit to come to this ordinance, and have no right either before God or before the church. They are unconverted, unbelieving sinners, Acts xxvi. 18; ever under the power of some lusts, 1 Pet. i. 14. They are incapable of self-examination, and cannot discern the Lord's body in the ordinance, being ignorant of the mystery of Christ. Therefore a competency of knowledge is necessary.

2. Those destitute of saving knowledge are unfit for this ordinance; and however they may have a right to it before the church, they have none before God. For they are without faith, Isa. liii. 11; without repentance, Luke xv. 17. And they cannot rightly discern the Lord's body neither in that ordinance, for it must be spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. ii. 14. To discern the Lord's body in this ordinance is, in the looking-glass of the elements, to behold with a spiritual eye the body of the Son of God, by death making atonement for sin, and peace with God; which draws the heart to a resting in and on him, as overcome with his glory discerned. They who are void of saving knowledge may imagine it, but cannot spiritually discern it, 1 Cor. ii. 8.

SECONDLY, Our faith must be examined. And here let us consider,

1. The necessity of faith in this ordinance.
2. The marks of true faith.

*First,* Let us consider the necessity of faith in this ordinance.

1. Without true faith one has no right to this ordinance. For unbelievers are not within the covenant of grace, faith being that by which one enters into it, and therefore they have no right to the seal; they are not of the family of heaven, and therefore have no right to the children's bread, John i. 12, 13. Nay, they can please God in nothing they do, Heb. xi. 6.

2. Without faith there can be no feeding on Christ. *Take, eat,* implies a spiritual action, a spiritual feeding. Faith is the hand and mouth of the soul. An unbeliever may feed on the bread of the Lord, as the beasts drank of the water of the rock in the wilderness; but they cannot feed on that bread which is the Lord.

*Secondly,* Let us consider the marks of true faith.

1. A superlative desire of Christ and his grace, i. e. above all persons and things, Isa. xxvi. 9; Matth. v. 6; for himself as well as his benefits, and not for his benefits only, Psal. lxxiii. 25. A desire of a whole Christ, not only for justification, but sanctification too, and that not only as sanctification is the way to make the soul happy, but to conform it to the image of God. It is absolute, without any reserve, condition or exception, Acts ix. 6.

2. A receiving and use-making of Jesus Christ in all his offices, John i. 12. Col. ii. 6. If sensible of thy absolute need of Christ, and thy own inability to help thyself, thou fleest out of thyself unto the Lord Jesus, renouncing thy own wisdom, righteousness, and will, to be guided by his Spirit, saved by his righteousness alone, and ruled by his law; and if in the course of thy life thou lookest to him for direction, acceptance with God, and strength in the battle against corruption, then undoubtedly thou believest.

*Thirdly,* Our repentance must be examined.

Here let us consider,

1. The necessity of repentance in this ordinance,
2. The marks of it.

*First,* Let us consider the necessity of repentance in this ordinance.

1. Without it there can be no suitable remembrance of a crucified Christ. He is represented there as broken and dying for our sins : and communicating impenitently with a hard heart, looks liker a triumph over Christ's death, than an affectionate remembrance of it. And so it brings on the person the guilt of the body and blood of the Lord.

2. Without it one cannot expect a sealed pardon, which is the end of the sacrament. God will not seal a pardon to an impenitent soul, nor give Heaven's comforts to insensible sinners, Acts ii. 38. As the sun refreshes the earth, when softened by rain, but otherwise parches and scorches it; so God revives the spirit of the contrite at a sacrament, while he is full of wrath against impenitent sinners there.

For this cause it is necessary to examine your sins, search them out, and search them through.

*Secondly*, Let us view the marks of true repentance.

Ye may know it by this, that the heart is thereby turned from all sin unto God, Psal. cxix. 59. 'I thought on my former ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.' Ask,

1. Have I turned from sin unto God, or am I yet living in my sins? Acts xxvi. 18.

2. Have I turned from all sin, Ezek. xiv. 6. from all gross sins in my practice, and from all sin simply, in my heart and affections? Is my heart loosed from sin? and do I hate all sin? Psal. cxix. 104.

3. If so, why have I done it? Is it only for the wrath annexed to it, or is it not because of the contrariety in it to God's nature and will? Ezek. xxxvi. 31.

*Lastly*, And are the remains of corruption a burden to my spirit, as they are to God's Spirit?

FOURTHLY, Our love must be examined.

And here let us view,

1. The necessity of it in this ordinance.

2. The marks of it.

*First*, Let us consider the necessity of love to God in this ordinance.

1. Love to God is necessary in it, because therein is held forth the greatest display of God's love in giving his own Son to the death for us. Here is that which of all things



may warm the heart most, and make it burn with love to God and Christ.

2. Love to our neighbour is necessary, because God's love, herein represented to us, doth require it, Eph. iv. ult. And if any man love not his neighbour, he does not, he cannot love God. And they that love God, will love his image wherever it is: they will 'love the brethren,' 1 John iii. 14. not only the rich, but the poor, even though they may have several faults, and possibly esteem them not so highly; and this not for their being of the same opinion, but precisely because of the grace of God appearing in them, and not because they are like themselves. And they that truly love Christ will love their brethren of mankind, by using proper endeavours to convince them of sin: to persuade them to believe in Christ, if they are yet strangers to him, or to walk worthy of the gospel, if they have been made partakers of the grace thereof; by associating with the saints, and avoiding all unnecessary commerce with the wicked; and by forgiving personal injuries, and doing good to all men, especially those of the household of faith.

*Secondly*, Let us view the marks of love to God,

1. True love to God is supreme love. As Moses' rod, when turned into a serpent, swallowed up the rods of the Egyptian magicians; so the love of God will swallow up all affections to the creature, whether lawful or unlawful enjoyments, Luke xiv. 27; and ever sit exalted above them all.

2. Love to our neighbour will make us wish well to all men, 1 Cor. v. 8; forgive those that have done us wrong, as we desire to be forgiven of God, Matth. v. 23, 24; and love the people of God of whatever denomination, because of the image of Christ appearing in them, 1 John iii. 14.

FIFTHLY, Our new obedience must be examined. Without new obedience we cannot pretend to be Christ's disciples, Matth. xi. 29. I shall give a few marks of it.

(1.) It is new in respect of the principle it proceeds from, the love of God, Heb. vi. 10. (2.) In respect of the end of it, which is God's glory, 1 Cor. x. 31. (3.) It is universal, Psal. cxix. 6. 'I have a respect unto all thy commandments.' (4.) It is constant, Matth. xxiv. 13. And

wherein the believer fails, it is his burden, and it sends him always to the blood of Christ, because of the sinfulness that attends it.

III. I proceed to shew, the necessity of self-examination. It is necessary in two respects.

1. To prevent the sin of coming unworthily to the Lord's table. If we rush on this ordinance without previous examining of ourselves, how can we miss of communicating unworthily?

2. To prevent the danger of coming so, which is eating and drinking damnation to one's self. The danger is great, (1.) To the soul, 1 Cor. xi. 29. 'For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.' (2.) To the body, ver. 30. 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.'

*Inf.* Examine yourselves, then, as to the state and case of yourselves, in order to prepare for this ordinance. And let none venture upon it without this antecedent exercise, for the danger is very great. And,

1. Be resolute in your self-examination. Resolve to set about this important duty, and resolute to follow it out: because ye will find no small difficulty in it, arising from several causes. *1st*, From yourselves, even your own corrupt hearts; and that on several heads. (1.) The ignorance of many makes it difficult. They have not the knowledge necessary to discern the nature or marks of grace. Ye must, then, endeavour the rather to discern these, or any one of them that is given. (2.) A secret respect to some bosom-idol which they would fain keep quiet, John iii. 20. There are stolen goods, which they have no will to restore, and therefore have no inclination to search them out. But, O consider that 'one thing thou lackest.' (3.) A secret fear that all is wrong with them. Perhaps it is not so. But if it be really so, ye have the more need to get matters set to rights. *2dly*, From Satan. He has a singular pique at this duty, and therefore will be ready to muster up all his forces to keep men from venturing on it, or to desist from it; and that [1.] By suggesting unto men the in-

superable difficulty of the duty : There is a lion in the way, a lion in the streets. [2.] By telling them, they will mar their own peace with it, but can never come to see the truth of grace, or to assurance by it. [3.] By setting them on to some other duty, which, tho' good in itself, is then unseasonable, to jumble out that which is then proper and necessary. Satan knows it to be an eminently useful duty, and therefore sets himself in opposition to it, that where matters are not right, they may be kept so ; and where persons are in a good state, he may rob them of the comfort of it. On these considerations, ye must be resolute and active in this exercise. The exhortation to it is doubled, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. 'Examine your own selves, prove your own selves.'

2. Ye must be impartial in this inquiry. Ye are in this matter judges in your own cause, and under a strong bias to partiality. But the best way is, to take the matter to the highest Judge, with a resolution to know the worst of your case, 1 Cor. xi. 31. Be not as Saul, when sent to destroy the Amalekites, who spared Agag and the fattest of the cattle. Overlook not right eyes and right hands. What Solomon says of flocks, may we say concerning your souls, Prov. xxvii. 23. 'Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.' However partial ye be, God will not be so to you ; so that your foolish partiality can do you no good, but a great deal of ill, as it will make you ignorant of your own case, which it is your greatest wisdom and interest to know.

*Quest.* May one who doubts of his being in the state of grace approach to the table of the Lord? *Ans.* They whose consciences bear witness, that they do unfeignedly desire Christ and his grace, and to depart from all iniquity, may come, notwithstanding of their doubts, which are their weakness, and which they are to struggle against. But if one's conscience witness to him, that he is not clear for Christ as he is offered in the gospel, he cannot come safely, Mat. v. 6. and xi. 6. 1 John iii. 20, 21.

Let every one, therefore, carefully examine himself as to his spiritual state, before he approach to this holy ordinance of the Lord's supper, lest he contract the horrid



guilt of trampling on the body and blood of Christ, to which he has a right at the Lord's table.

THE NECESSITY OF SELF-EXAMINATION CONSIDERED.\*

2 COR. xiii. 5.—*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith : prove your own selves : know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.*

THE dispensations of providence begin to be alarming to this secure generation, and look like the beginning of sorrows, in the great mortality prevailing in several places. And the language of such a dispensation is, as is expressed in the text bidding every one *examine themselves, whether they be in the faith, &c.* In which words we have two things.

1. A necessary duty proposed ; and that is, the trial of

\* Though this discourse, consisting of two short sermons, was not delivered as any part of this catechetical work, yet it is here inserted on account of its affinity to the preceding discourse, and from a persuasion that it may, through the divine blessing, be useful to the reader, as the subject is of no small importance both to saints and sinners ; and were the design of it properly attended to, might prove a happy means of retrieving the decayed interests of religion amongst us. And it is thought, this discourse will be the more acceptable to the reader, when he is told, that it was the last the author ever wrote. after he was confined to his house by the illness of which he died ; and that these two short sermons were preached from a window in the manse to the people standing without, on the 2d and 9th of April, 1732 ; after which he preached no more, the God whom he had served in the work of the gospel, from the latter end of the year 1699, having called him home on the 20th of May, 1732, to inherit the crown of righteousness laid up for him. But by it, and his other valuable writings, he yet speaketh ; and his name and memory will be revered, as long as a taste for pure and undefiled religion subsists amongst us.

their state. It is proposed under a double notion, *Examine*, and *prove*, the call being doubled, because of the weight of the matter. And,

1st, Of self-examination. And here, (1.) Consider the point the apostle would have them put to the trial, *Whether ye be in the faith*. He knew very well that they professed faith in Christ; but all is not gold that glisters. None but believers, true believers, whose faith worketh by love, being a spiritual vital principle within them, will see heaven: but many take themselves, and others take them, for believers, who yet are not so. (2.) The trial he would have them to make of that point, *Examine yourselves*. The church of Corinth was a divided church. There was a censorious party among them, conceited of themselves, and despisers of this eminent and highly distinguished apostle. For all the clear demonstrations there were of the Lord's being with him, they sought a proof of *Christ's speaking in him*, ver. 3. Now, says he, ye are very much abroad, busy examining me, and make much ado for a proof of Christ speaking in me: I would advise you to be more at home, and examine yourselves. Put yourselves to the trial, whether ye are in the faith or not. The original word signifies to make such a trial as one does of a thing by piercing through it, whereby he may know what is within, and whether it be sound or not.

2dly, Of self-probation: *Prove your own selves*, to wit, by trial, as in courts offenders are tried, or they who stand for an office are put on trials, to prove whether they be fit for it or not; or rather as goldsmiths try metals, whether by the fire, or by the touchstone, whereby they discern the true metal from counterfeit. This is near akin to the former expression, *Examine*, but is not quite the same. This last speaks the bringing the matter to a point, the pursuing the trial till it should end in a full proof of their state, good or bad. Ye, q. d. seek a proof of Christ speaking in me; pray rest not till ye get a proof of your own state.

2. The weighty ground that makes this duty necessary, most necessary: *Know ye not your own selves, how that Christ Jesus is in you, except ye be reprobates*. Wherein we have,

(1.) The ground itself, *Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates*. Now, Christ dwells in the heart by faith, Eph. iii. 17. Where there is not a vital union with Christ the person is *reprobate*. There is no union with him but by faith: therefore ye have great need to examine whether ye be in faith or not. *Reprobate* here is not opposed to *elect*: for certainly the apostle did not mean to drive them to absolute despair, in case they found themselves naught in the trial; or to persuade them, that if Christ was not in them already, he would never be in them. But it is opposed to *upright* and *genuine*, and so denotes a person, or thing, that being tried is found unsound or counterfeit, as Jer. vi. ult. and so useless, absolutely unfit for the ends desired, Tit. i. ult. and so rejected, Jer. vi. ult.

(2.) The necessity of the knowledge of one's self in this point, *Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, &c.* Knowledge of one's self is far preferable to the knowledge of other men. Alas! what will it avail men to be raking into the state and case of others, while in the mean time they are strangers to themselves? They do not advert to this great point, how Christ is in them, else they are all wrong for time and eternity.

*Observe* from the connection, That self-judging is a proper mean to bring people off from rash judging of others. It was not rash judging in Peter, when he pronounced Simon Magus to be in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, who had offered money for the extraordinary power of conferring the Holy Ghost. Neither is it rash judging, to pronounce profane men, scandalous in the habitual course of their lives, to be going in the way to destruction; for the spirit of God by Paul says the same thing, Gal. v. 19,—21. 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' But it was rash judging in these Corinthians, to question Christ's speaking in Paul, because in some things he was not so acceptable to them as some others. So it is rash



judging, to reject men who conscientiously appear to adhere to the uncontroverted points of practical godliness, because they differ from them in some points controverted among good and holy men. Self-judging would call men home to their own case, so that they would not be at so much leisure to ramble abroad. It would let them see so much evil in themselves, and so much they have need to be forgiven of God, that they would not dare be severe on their brethren, and rigorous on their behaviour, lest the measure they mete to others should be measured to them again. Therefore I cannot but most earnestly recommend this practice of self-judging, which will happily tend to make you low in your own eyes, and preserve you from many miscarriages to and misconstructions of others.

Having thus explained the words, and considered their connection with the preceding context, I shall at this time only observe from them the following doctrine, viz.

DOCT. 'It is a most necessary duty lying on men professing the name of Christ, to examine themselves, whether they are in the faith or not; and to pursue that examination and trial, till, bringing the matter to a proof, they come to a point with reference to that great concern.'

In discoursing from this important doctrine, I shall consider,

- I. The point to be tried.
- II. The trial of the point,
- III. Make some improvement.

I. I shall consider the point to be tried. The point concerning which every one is to try himself is, Whether he is in the faith. And here let us consider,

1. What it is to be in the faith.
2. The weight and importance of this point.

*First*, I am to shew, what it is to be in the faith. To have true faith, or to be true believers, and to be in the faith, is all one as to the matter; even as to be in Christ, and Christ's being in us, is the same thing in effect. The man that is endowed with the grace of faith, enriched with

precious faith, is in the faith: and the faithless, the unbelieving, in whom the grace of saving faith has never been wrought by the Holy Spirit, is not in the faith. But I conceive the expression aims at these three things.

1. The elect's peculiarity of this heavenly gift; hence called 'the faith of God's elect,' Tit. i. 1. It is the peculiar treasure of these happy objects of everlasting love; it is given to none but them; it remains among that blessed party, as a peculiarity of their community. Hence the apostle Peter addressed himself to those to whom he writes, under this character, 'to them that have obtained like precious faith with us,' 2 Pet. i. 1. There is a fourfold faith mentioned in scripture: An historical faith, that devils partake of, Jam. ii. 19; a faith of miracles, which one may have, and yet want charity, or true saving grace, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. a temporary faith, which apostates in the end may have had, like the stony-ground hearers, Matth. xiii. 20, 21. But the faith here to be tried, is the faith that unites to Christ, which none have but those 'ordained to eternal life,' Acts xiii. 48. It is that whereby a sinner receives and embraces Jesus Christ as a Saviour, and relies upon and trusts in him as his Saviour in particular, for the whole of his salvation, and in virtue of which he lives to God. Now, it is every one's concern to try whether he be in this faith or not.

2. The life of faith. The Christian life is indeed the life of faith. Hence Paul says, 'The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God,' Gal. ii. 20. By Adam's eating the forbidden fruit, mankind were led off from the heavenly life into the life of sense, living to gratify their senses, follow their passions, please the vanity of their minds, and the vileness of their affections. Now, God has by Jesus Christ brought in a new way of heavenly life as the road to happiness; and that is the life of faith. Ye should try whether ye are in that road or not. The life of sense is indeed a spiritual death: see whether ye are *in the faith*, as in the life, the true life of the soul.

3. The operativeness or efficacy of faith: for 'faith worketh by love,' Gal. v. 6. Faith lies inwardly, undiscernible to all the world, but to God and the believer him-

self. But then it is not a dormant or inactive principle, but spreads its effects outwardly through the whole man. Sound faith works the whole conversation, in every part thereof, into true holiness, brings in an universal respect to the commands of God, and sanctifies the whole man throughout. In vain do they pretend to be possessed of faith, who do not live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. For they to whom God has *shewn the good*, Christ himself, and have by faith rolled the burden of their salvation upon him, will do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God, as the genuine and never-failing fruits of true faith. So ye would consider whether ye be in the faith, which is the way to all other good things.

*Secondly*, I come to shew the weight and importance of this point. There is nothing about you that can possibly be of greater importance for you to know, and to be clear about. It is the head point, on which all that concerns your eternal salvation depends; and that is a matter of the last consequence to every sinner. We must not stay to enumerate the several particulars. But the weight of it will sufficiently appear, if ye consider, that on it depends,

1. Your union with Christ, and saving interest in him. If Christ dwells in you, it is by faith, Eph. iii. 17. This is supposed in the text. We remain branches of the first Adam, without Christ, till we by faith come into him as the true vine. If ye are not in the faith, if ye are not of that household, ye are none of Christ's; ye have no saving interest in him, and so none in his purchase. Ye are yet far from God, strangers to his covenant, and without any special relation to him.

2. Your deliverance from the curse of the law, and your absolution from the sentence of the condemnation ye were born under. Hence the apostle says, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ,' Rom. v. 1. If you have received remission of sin, it has been by faith. Hence the apostle says, 'Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses,' Acts xiii. 38, 39. If ye



are not in the faith, there is not one of all your sins, from the womb to this day, but is sealed up among God's treasures, and will be brought out against you in due time. The curse of the broken law stakes you down under wrath: For 'he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him,' John iii. 36.

3. Your doing any thing acceptable in God's sight: For 'without faith it is impossible to please him,' Heb. xi. 6; If ye be not in the faith, ye are reprobate to every good work. Ye can no more serve the true ends of Christianity, than dross can go for gold, or discovered counterfeits pass for current money. For without saving faith, ye are without Christ; and without Christ ye can do nothing, John xv. 5; So that however your works may be in the world's view, some good, some bad; yet there are none of them, however good in themselves, good in God's sight, as they do not proceed from a principle of faith in the heart, and are not directed to the glory of God as their ultimate scope and end.

4. *Lastly*, Your eternal salvation. It is the stated ordinance of heaven, Mark xvi. 16; 'He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.' So the clearing of that point, is the clearing whether ye be in a state of salvation or not. This is a point than which there is none more weighty and important. How then can that miss to be a point of the greatest moment, on which it depends? Were men more concerned as to their lot and place in the other world, they would be less concerned about the vain pleasures, amusements, and profits of this world; and bend all their endeavours and attention to gain a blessed and happy eternity.

Upon this, I hope, some may be ready to say, Seeing so much depends upon being in the faith, and since we must eternally perish without it, what shall we do to get faith, that we may not underlie the wrath of God for ever? I answer, Faith is the gift of God, and to him you must apply for it; Jesus Christ is the author and finisher of faith, and to him ye must betake yourselves, that he may work it in you; and the Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of faith, and it is the effect of his operation: so that you must have recourse to him, that he may 'fulfil in you the work

of faith with power. More particularly, if you would have this precious grace of faith,

1. Be diligent in reading and hearing the word. This is a mean that God hath appointed for begetting faith in the hearts of sinners. Hence the apostle tells us, Rom. x. 17; that 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' Such as would have faith without hearing, would have it out of God's way. See that ye diligently attend the preaching of the word, and miss no opportunity of hearing it. The ordinances are the organ through which the Spirit breathes, when he conveys quickening influences into the souls of men. They are the conduit-pipes through which the water of life runs. They are Christ's road in which he comes to bless sinners. See then that ye be not out of the way when he passeth by. The pool of Bethesda was a figure of the ordinances, to which the diseased repaired, to wait the descent of the angel to trouble the waters: and whosoever stepped into the pool after the moving of the waters; was immediately healed. But if any absented themselves, they could receive no benefit thereby. So if ye would be healed of your spiritual diseases, especially unbelief, that deadly malady, that fixes the guilt of all your sins upon you, make conscience of attending the preaching of the word, and cry for the Spirit of faith.

2. Pray earnestly to God, that he would teach you to believe. Remember faith is his gift, and he bestows it on whomsoever he will. Pray diligently for it; and redeem time for that end. And pray importunately, besieging heaven with your cries for that effect, as resolved to get what ye want. Seek faith from God as a condemned man would seek a pardon: seek this, as a man that sees death before him would sue for his life. Remember, O sinner, that there is no life for you without it: for 'he that believeth not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.' Fall down then before God, and cry for it as for life, saying, 'O give me faith, or else I die. I may live, and be happy for ever, without friends or relations, wealth, honours, or pleasures; but I cannot live happily and comfortably without faith. Without it I can do no-

thing acceptable in thy sight. Vouchsafe me this precious blessing, that I may glorify thy name for ever.'

II. I now proceed to consider the trial of this point. This the text takes up in these two things, self-examination, and self-probation.

*First, Self-examination.* We must carefully examine, whether we be in the faith or not. And this speaks the following things.

1. The necessity of the knowledge of the faith, both of the doctrine of faith in fundamentals, and the grace of faith as to the nature of it, though it be not an experimental knowledge. No body can examine themselves on a point they have no notion of: so that those who are grossly ignorant of the nature of faith, are quite incapable of self-examination in this point, but just walk on in darkness and confusion to their own ruin, 1 John ii. 11. How much then does it concern all to cultivate the knowledge both of the doctrine and grace of faith?

2. Men professing faith may yet be void of it. They may seem to be in the faith, in a gracious state, who are yet in unbelief, and in the gall of bitterness: otherwise there would be no need of self-examination on that head. There is no need of it in heaven or hell; for there are no false colours worn there; nor do any there seem to be any more but what really they are. But here, in the visible church, are foolish virgins as well as wise, and foolish builders as well those who are not so. Great is the need, then, of self-examination.

3. The certain knowledge of our estate, whether we be in the faith or not, gracious or graceless, may be attained in the use of ordinary means, without extraordinary revelation. Self-examination and probation is that means; 2 Pet. i. 10. 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.' Many complain they can never get to a point in that matter: but let them inform their judgment as to the nature and evidences of faith; let them lay aside their laziness, and their untender walking, shewing a precise regard to the duties of morality; and it will not be so hard. But when people remain in confusion as to the nature and evidences of faith, cannot bring themselves to



the bar, and continue untender in their walk, what can be expected? Hence our Lord says, Matth. vi. 23. 'If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!' And says the wise man, Prov. x. 4. 'He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand.' Whereas diligence in the Christian walk, and tender walking in the way of the Lord, are happy means of getting marks of faith. Hence Christ says, John xiv. 21. 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.'

4. There is a rule of trial and self-examination given. That we are bid examine ourselves, says there is a rule given we are to examine ourselves by. Hence the beloved disciple says, 1 John v. 13. 'These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.' God's word is a looking-glass, wherein good and bad may see their true image, if they will. It is a fire that separates the good metal and dross; it is our way-mark, shewing where we are for the present, whither we are going, and pointing to the right way. This scars many at the Bible; and it is but few that make this proper use of it, but scurf it over. O! Sirs, regard God's word, and try your state by it, for it is a sure and infallible rule, nay the only rule for it.

5. There is a faculty of self-judging in man, otherwise he were incapable of examining himself. Hence the wise man says, Prov. xx. 27. 'The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly.' This candle, whether shining with the light of reason only, or with the light of grace also, is capable to make the discovery. Even the foolish virgins saw at length that their lamps were gone out. And all are made to see they are not in the faith, before they are brought into it. So then you may, if ye will, erect this court of examination within your own breast, your own soul and conscience being both judge and party; but it is only a subordinate judge, whose sentence, if wrong, will not stand, but be

overthrown by the supreme Judge, by whose law the decision must be made.

6. *Lastly*, A close applying of that self-judging faculty for the trial of that point. Hence the Psalmist saith this was his practice, Psal. lxxvii. 6. 'I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.' The man must rouse up himself, as peremptory to know his state; must inform himself of the rule he is to be judged by, set it before him, and apply his own case impartially to it, that he may see how they agree, and how the decision is to be made. Say not ye cannot do this. Ye can examine whether ye be in a wealthy or straitened condition; when something is laid to your charge, whether ye be guilty or not; and whether ye be in such a one's favour or not. Only ye cannot, because ye will not, examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith. O! Sirs, rouse up yourselves to this important exercise, shake off all lazy delays, and set about it vigorously.

*Secondly*, Self-probation. Ye must *prove yourselves*. This speaks.

1. Ye must not take the matter of your state upon trust, hoping the best without due evidence, and stopping there, like the person of whom it is said, Isa. xlv. 20. 'He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?' That is an easy way indeed, but very unsafe; as was the case of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. unto whom our Lord says, 'Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' Men entering on self-examination find it difficult and thorny, and they shrink back, contenting themselves to hope well, on they know not what grounds: so the examination is broken off ere the matter is brought to a proof. If the examination before the tribunal of God could be shifted that way, and the decision made in men's favour as superficially, the matter were the less. But there the examination must go through, and the decision must be made, according to, not men's groundless hopes, but the reality of things; according to what Bildad says, Job viii. 13, 14. 'So are the paths of all that forget God, and

the hypocrite's hope shall perish : whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web.'

2. The matter may, through a close examination, be brought to a decisive proof, however dark and intricate it may seem to be ; otherwise we would not be bid prove ourselves. Men may, by close examination of themselves, and thoroughly sifting their own hearts, discover that in and about them, which, according to the word, is decisive of their state, good or bad. Which will leave men inexcusable, in not pursuing for it, but contentedly walking on in darkness. Closely ply the duty according to scripture-rules, and ye will find out how matters stand.

3. We must not stop, but pursue our self-examination, till we come to that proof, and so come to a point in the matter on trial. Thrust forward resolutely, looking to the Lord for light, and his help in the search : He will roll away stones of difficulty, and make darkness light before you ; remembering what Christ says, Matth. xiii. 12. ' Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.' And suppose ye should not reach that proof at one time, ye must carry on the examination at another time, and so from time to time, till ye reach the proof, This is your duty ; and if ye stedfastly persist therein, ye will bring matters to a crisis.

4. *Lastly*, Having reached the proof of your state, whether ye be in the faith or not, pronounce judgment thereon, whether it be good or bad. This is the end for which the self-examination is gone through, and the proof was searched out, that you may thereon form a certain conclusion, whether ye be in the faith or not. And it is necessary so to do, that if ye find ye are not in the faith, ye may give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eye-lids, till ye be brought into that happy state ; and that if ye find you are in the faith, ye may give God the glory of it, and improve your blessed condition to his honour.

I shall conclude with an use of exhortation. O ! Sirs, examine ye yourselves, whether ye be in the faith, and cease not till ye bring the matter to a proof, a decisive point.

Before I press this exhortation, with motives, I will take



notice of some impediments in the way that keep men back from self-examination.

1. Their being carried away with the things of this world, as with a flood, that they can mind nothing else, and have a heart for no other business. Some are so overwhelmed with worldly cares and secular business, that any solid care or concern about their salvation is quite warded off, and there is no access for the same. Hence our Lord cautions his disciples, Luke xxi. 34. 'Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.' Some are so drenched in the vanity and pleasures of the world, that they have neither mind of it, nor heart or hand for it. Madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead, and are at their place, before ever they have put this matter to a trial. O! Sirs, guard against this excessive attachment to the world, which will prove ruinous in the end.

2. Love to carnal ease predominant. Spiritual sloth is so masterly over those that give up themselves to it, that, in the midst of warnings from heaven, from without and from within, they must have their ease, and keep undisturbed, cost what it will. Hence says Solomon, Prov. vi. 9, 10, 11. 'How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy wants as an armed man.' But O what a risk is that, foreboding a fearful wakening! If ye love your own souls, strive against this sluggish disposition.

3. A false notion of the easiness of the way to heaven. Many in their thoughts of their getting to heaven, the necessity of their being in the faith, regeneration, universal and unlimited obedience to God in the way of duty, and sparing no known sin, never comes in their head: only they believe God is a merciful God; and when the time comes, they must apply for his mercy. Hence our Lord exhorts, Luke xiii. 25. 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.'

4. A secret fear that all is wrong. This frights them from self-examination; and they chuse rather to patch up their present case the best way they can, than fairly to open the wound that it may be healed. What is this but to chuse to die of the disease, rather than to lay it open for cure? But the eyes most closely shut now will be opened in the other world, as the rich man's were, Luke xvi. 23. Be not discouraged with fears, but be willing to know the worst as well as the best of your case; for that is your safest course.

5. A general hopefulness as to one's state, got by some passing reflections on some good thing they imagine they have, without examining to the bottom. This men come at easily, as it were in passing: and being easy in this course, they never set themselves to go to the ground of the cause, like the church of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. forecited. This is a very dangerous state, and proves the ruin of many.

6. *Lastly*, Satan has a mighty influence to the hinderance of it, both in saints and sinners. In the former he mars the comfort of the clear view of their state: in the latter he keeps them from waking out of their natural security, and so holds them back from Christ. And I know no duty he sets himself more against. For being an accomplished master in hellish subtlety, he well knows, that if sinners were at due pains in examining themselves, and discovered the damnable state they were in by nature, they would hasten an escape to the gospel city of refuge; and therefore he lulls them in a sleep of profound security that they may not feel their misery, and the worse than Egyptian bondage they are in to sin and Satan. Awake then, ye that sleep, that Christ may give you light.

I shall now press the exhortation by some motives; and O that the Lord may carry it home with power on your hearts, as your eternal welfare is deeply concerned therein!

*Mot. 1.* God has given thee a faculty of examining thyself. He has set up a twofold candle for thee; one within thee, conscience, Prov. xx. 27. forecited; and another without thee, the written word, Psal. cxix. 105. And will ye venture to walk on in darkness as to your state, while ye have these lights to let you into it? Sirs, if ye will not

bring in that light, and use it for this purpose, a light will be let in, whether ye will or not, that will set the matter in due light, either in mercy, as in the case of the prodigal, Luke xv. 17. or in wrath, as in that of the rich man, chap. xvi. 23.

*Mot. 2.* To be bound up from this duty still, is next door to a desperate case, Isa. xlv. 20. above quoted. While a person is inquiring about his state, there is some hope; but while men are unconcerned about it whether good or bad, that is like the case of men sleeping to death in their bleeding wounds. Publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of heaven before self-righteous Pharisees, because the former were more ready by far to admit the conviction of the badness of their state, than the latter, who were blinded with delusive ideas of their own righteousness.

*Mot. 3.* It is certain ye were once not in the faith, not in a gracious state, as the Ephesians were, Eph. ii. 3, 12; Now, dare ye pawn your eternal salvation on it, that ye are now in the faith, in a state of grace? No; but ye hope the best, and are easy. But one would think, that in all reason, according to the weight of the matter, one should labour for a proportional certainty. And to leave a matter of the utmost importance at an uncertainty, and make a leap in the dark into the other world, is a most miserable affair, and argues the greatest instability. Surely then this requires a most solemn and deliberate trial; and if ye were wise for yourselves, ye would bring it to a point.

*Mot. 4.* There are many false pretenders to religion, from off whose faces Christ will draw the mask. Hence he says, Matth. vii. 22, 23; 'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity,' Luke xiii. 25, 26, 27. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not, whence you are; then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I



tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.' Many have Jacob's voice, but Esau's hands; like Judas, they kiss Christ, and betray him. Such pretenders were the Laodiceans, when they fancied they were 'rich, and increased with goods, and stood in need of nothing,' Rev. iii. 17. Men may go a great length, in legal humiliation with Ahab, in repentance with Pharaoh, in reformation with Herod, in zeal for religion with Jehu, and in strictness of life as to the outward man with Paul before his conversion; and yet be strangers to the life of religion and godliness. And should not these instances alarm all who profess Christ, to bring the matter to a trial, whether they are in the faith or not? as a mistake here is of the most dangerous consequence.

*Mot. 5.* This would be a matter of the greatest utility, if followed through, both to believers and unbelievers. To the former it brings the comfort of their faith, clears up their gracious state, and gives them so many evidences for heaven as they have proofs of their faith. To the other it may be the beginning of good; it will give them the knowledge of their disease, which is the first step to the cure; and if once they be thoroughly convinced of their sinful and damnable estate, they may be induced to leave no stone unturned till they be rescued therefrom, by application by faith to the blood and spirit of Jesus Christ, who saves from sin, and delivers from the wrath that is to come.

*Mot. 6.* Try now your state, for God will try one and all of you, and no wrong judgment will pass before him. O! to what purpose should we shift a trial, which we know we will certainly undergo, from an infallible hand? We cannot by any sleight or artifice cast a blind before his eyes, Gal. vi. 7. 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. All things are naked, and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do,' Heb. iv. 13. Not the least thing in or about us can escape his all-piercing eye; for he says, 'I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees,' Zeph. i. 12. God has trying times for lands, and for particular persons, wherein he sets them. And such a trying time we have just now. O! let us regard the operation of his hands, lest he proceed

against us by terrible things in righteousness. However, should we pass untried in this world, we will most certainly be tried in the other, and there will be no altering of the decision then made. Should we not then be stirred up to try ourselves now, and see how matters stand betwixt God and us, that we may not be condemned in the great day of decision and judgment?

*Mot. last.* It is the express command of God, that ye should try yourselves, whether ye be in the faith or not. God has not only warned you to try this important point, both by his word and providence, but has expressly interposed his authority, binding it as an indispensable duty upon you to try yourselves, as ye will answer it on your highest peril. I say then, Try yourselves as to this weighty affair, lest ye be found to be fighters against God, to spurn at his yoke, and to throw his cords from off you. Try yourselves then, I say, whether ye be in the faith or not, as ye would regard the authority of the great Lord of heaven and earth, and would not fall into the hands of the living God, from which there is no deliverance.

## THE DANGER OF UNWORTHY COMMUNICATING \*.

1 COR. xi. 29.—*For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

IT is a seasonable advice which Solomon gives, Prov. xxiii. 1. 'When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee.' We expect the great Ruler of heaven and earth is to cover a table for us in this place; but at it some may get their *viaticum* for heaven, others theirs for hell. The Jews say of the manna in the wilderness, that it tasted according as every one desired. This I may say of the sacrament, it will be different according to the different palates and constitution of the communicants, like the word; to some the savour of life unto life, and to others the savour of death unto death. The apostle compares baptism to the passing through the Red Sea, which to the Israelites gave a passage to Canaan, but it was a grave to the Egyptians, to swallow them up. The Lord's supper is an open pit for destruction to some, and a chariot to carry others on in their way to heaven. The apostle tells us here the danger of unworthy communicating, notwithstanding which people mostly need rather a bridle than a spur to it.

1. The connection, in the particle *for*; which shews the

\* Though this discourse was not delivered in the course of this work, but many years before, when the author was minister at Simprin, it was judged adviseable to insert it here, as a proper addition to, and in further illustration of the preceding discourses on the Lord's supper. And as unworthy communicating is in itself a great sin, and one of the epidemical evils of the present time, a discourse on such a subject must be deemed extremely seasonable in the present juncture; and the reader will do well to peruse it with that seriousness and attention the matter of it requires.



words to be a reason of that exhortation, ver. 28, ‘ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup,’ viz. in the right manner for the hazard is great if we do otherwise.

2. A duty supposed, *eating and drinking*; which looks sternly on the sacrilege of the Papists in taking the cup from the people, and putting in only wafers into their mouths, contrary to Christ’s express command, ‘ Drink ye all of it.’ It is the people, as well as the minister, that eat and drink judgment to themselves, ver. 30.

3. The way that many mar this duty: They do it *unworthily*, that is unsuitably, unmeetly; they mar it in the making, not going about it in the right way and manner. They are guests, but not meet guests, for the holy table. They come to the marriage-feast, but not with wedding-garments.

4. What comes of it. The consequences are dreadful. They *eat and drink damnation* [Gr. judgment] *to themselves*. This judgment to some is temporal, to others eternal. This they are said to eat and drink to themselves; it becomes poison to them, and so they take their death with their own hands. While the meat is in their mouth, wrath goes down with it, as the devil did with Judas’ sop.

5. A particular sin lying on them, which provokes God so to treat them: They do *not discern the body* of the Lord Christ; they do not duly consider the relation betwixt the elements and Christ, and so they rush in upon these creatures of bread and wine, that are of so deep a sanctification as to be the symbols of the body and blood of the Son of God; they sit down at that table, as to their ordinary meals, without that reverence and devotion that ought to be in those who sit down at such a holy table.

Two doctrines may be observed, viz.

DOCT. I. ‘ Though the right way and manner of communicating be the main thing to be studied in that solemn action, yet many content themselves with the bare doing of the thing, neglecting the doing of it suitably, and in a right manner.’

DOCT. II. ‘ He that communicates unworthily, eats and

drinks judgment to himself, while he eats the sacramental bread, and drinks the wine.'

I shall prosecute each doctrine in order.

DOCT. I. 'Though the right way and manner of communicating be the main thing to be studied in that solemn action, yet many content themselves with the bare doing of the thing, neglecting the doing of it suitably, and in a right manner.'

Here I shall shew,

I. The necessity of communicating suitably, and in a right manner.

II. Why it is, that though the right way and manner of communicating be the main thing to be studied in that solemn action, yet many content themselves with the bare doing of it, neglecting the doing of it suitably, and in a right manner.

III. Make some improvement.

I. I am to shew the necessity of communicating suitably, and in a right manner.

1. God commands it, ver. 28. 'So let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.' The particle is emphatical, as, John iv. 6. 'Jesus therefore being wearied with his journey, sat thus [or so] on the well.' Acts vii. 8. 'So Abraham begat Isaac.' The matter and manner of all duties are linked together in the command of God. What God hath joined, let no man put asunder. He will have his service well done, as well as done, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. 'And thou Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts.' Masters on earth challenge to themselves a power to cause their servants do their work as they would have it; but though they leave the way of doing it sometimes to the discretion of the servants, yet the Lord never does so, but always commands not only what, but how to do, 1 Thess. iv. 1.

2. No duty is pleasing to God, unless it be done in a right manner, *ib.* Unless it be so done, it is not done to

his mind. It gives not content to the heart of Christ, though it may give content to men's own blinded hearts. God's will is the supreme law; for we are his own, and what we do, we ought to study to do it to his mind: otherwise it cannot please him, do what we will.

3. Because nothing is a work theologically good, but what is done in a right manner, Heb. xi. 6. 'Without faith it is impossible to please him.' There was a vast difference betwixt Cain and Abel's offering, Gen. iv. 4, 5. 'The Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.' See the reason, Heb. xi. 4. 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.' *Bonum non, nisi ex integra causa oritur, bonum est.* Hence the good works of the heathens were but splendid sins; and those of the unregenerate are so; for they may do much, but not with a perfect heart. One sins and damns his soul at the Lord's table, another communicates worthily. What makes the difference, but the manner of doing? Hence praying is accounted but howling; eating and drinking is not to eat the Lord's supper, 1 Cor. xi. 20. Common eating and drinking are sins, Matth. xxiv. 37. Cloth may be good, and yet the coat base, if it be marred in the making.

4. Though the work be in itself good, yet if it be done unsuitably, not in a right manner, it provokes God to inflict heavy strokes on the doer. Is not a master often at that, he would rather men had not done the work, than that it should be so done? 1 Chron. xv. 13. 'For because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.' So Jehu did something for God, but not in a right manner; hence the Lord says, Hos. i. 4. 'I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu.' And the Corinthians having communicated unworthily, or not in the right manner, the apostle observes concerning them, 1 Cor. xi. 31. 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many asleep.' In the mean, little is accepted, if it is rightly done; hence it is said of Asa, 1 Kings xv. 14. 'The high places were not removed; nevertheless Asa, his heart was perfect with the Lord all his days.'

5. Only the duty done in a right manner does prosper,



and get the blessing. Mark that *so*, Matth. xxiv. 46. 'Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh, shall find so doing. A man may pray ten thousand times, and never be heard; and go from one communion to another, and never be sealed to the day of redemption. A groan from the heart will do more than all these, Rom. viii. 16. Our meat can do us no good, and our clothes cannot warm us, if we do not use them in the right manner. No wonder that many are never the better of all the sacraments they get, for they communicate not aright.

6. If we communicate not in a right manner, we do no more than others, than hypocrites actually do, and Pagans may do. Hypocrites eat and drink, who shall drink eternally of the wine of the wrath of God, Luke xiii. 26, 27. Pagans can eat bread and drink wine; nay, the very beasts may do it. And shall a Christian think that he does enough when he does no more?

7. *Lastly*, God gets no glory otherwise from us in our duty, Matth. v. 16. He gets much dishonour by the way that many of us partake of his table. The means must be suited to the end; and therefore our duty must be rightly done, if we would glorify God.

II. I proceed to shew, why it is, that though the right way and manner of communicating be the main thing in that solemn action, yet many content themselves with the bare doing of the thing, neglecting the doing of it suitably, and in a right manner.

1. Because to communicate is easy, but to communicate in a right manner is very difficult. It is easy to wait on several days and hear sermons, to get a token, and eat the bread and drink the wine: but it is a hard task to plough up the fallow-ground, to mourn for sin, to get the heart in case for communion with Christ, and by faith to feed upon him. It is easy to say, we resolve to be for Christ; but it is hard to pluck out right-eyes, and cut off right hands; it is hard to set idols to the door, and give the whole heart to a Saviour.

2. Because they obtain their end by the bare performance of the duty. As, (1.) Peace of mind. Many consciences are half-awakened; though they be not so far awakened as

to give men no rest without doing duty in a right manner, yet they will not hold their peace should a man neglect duties altogether. (2.) It gains a man credit in the world, and that is a strong cord to draw a man to the outside of duties, Matth. vi. 2; It is no small matter to have a name, and to seem good; and to be called godly, is affected by those who are at no pains to be what they would seem. These are the mean and low ends they propose to themselves, and they get them by that way. But the high and noble ends of the Christian communion with God, strength against corruption, &c. call for other sort of work.

3. Men may get duties done, and their lust kept too; they may go to a communion-table, and to the table of devils too: but to do duties in the right manner is inconsistent with peace with our lusts, Psal. lxvi. 18; If they would have a calm sea, Jonah must be thrown overboard. Hence they take so little pains in self-examination before a communion. There are some secret lust which the man has no will to disturb; therefore he will not light the candle and search, lest he should be obliged to cast out the old leaven.

4. Because men mostly have low and mean thoughts of God and his service, Mal. i. 6, 7, 8. It is not every one that knows the Lord. Many worship they know not what, and therefore they give him they care not what. If men had suitable thoughts of that God whom they serve, they would be careful how they serve him, Psal. lxxxix. 6, 7. Wherefore the apostle, to put men out of their sloth, and engage them to the right performance of duties, tells what a one God is, Heb. xii. 28, 29. 'Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.'

5. Because men mostly are unacquainted with communion and fellowship with God to be had in duties; they know not the necessity of it, nor the excellency of it. Hence they are not at pains about it. He that minds to entertain his prince, will be at pains to provide all things necessary for that effect, while he is not so taken up who is expecting no guests.

*Use.* Of lamentation. O how sad is it that there are so

many who content themselves with the bare work of communicating, neglecting the right manner ! That there are many such, take these evidences.

1. Many approach very rashly and inconsiderately to the Lord's table. It would make a tender heart to tremble, how forward many are for going to the communion-table, though it be fenced by the severe threatenings of God. They are like the horse, Job xxxix. 22, 23, 24. who ' mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted ; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage ; neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.' And they are as the leviathan, by whom ' darts are accounted as stubble,' and who laugheth at the shaking of a spear,' Job xli. 29. They snatch up the holy things of God, and with polluted fingers do they handle them. How few are there that find any notable difficulty in their way to it ? Truly it is lamentable to think of this rashness.

2. The little pains that many are at beforehand to get their hearts prepared for this work. Any thing they do, lies most in hearing in public ; few wrestling with God, that he would prepare them as a bride adorned for her husband.

3. The licentious lives of communicants. Many, when the work is over, turn just back to their old ways, clearly discovering that it has made no great impression on their hearts while they were at it. Many are a shame to religion, harden the profane, and grieve the hearts of the godly, by their courses.

We may justly wonder that the Lord does not sometimes make a breach among us, and mingle our blood with our sacrifices. Under the law, the Lord made some sad instances of his anger ; as in the case of Uzzah, 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7. of the men of Bethshemesh, 1 Sam. vi. 19. and of Nadab and Abihu, Lev. x. 1, 2 Is not the Lord as angry still with the abuse of Gospel holy things ? Yes, surely ; but now the dispensation is more spiritual, and the strokes of anger are more spiritual also ; such as hardness of heart, and blindness of mind. Some souls may get their death's



wounds at the table, though their bodies come away whole and sound.

*Use, Of exhortation.* Be exhorted to get your hearts in a case for performing this duty after the right manner. It may be some have communicated often, and never to this day communicated once right. O strive to begin now! The advantage of it is great. Ye may find that in a communion, that ye never found yet, if ye be worthy partakers; if not, the hazard is great. Which take in

DOCT. II. 'He that communicates unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself, while he eats the sacramental bread, and drinks the sacramental wine.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What communicating unworthily is.

II. What judgments unworthy communicating exposes people to.

III. Make application,

I. I am to shew, what communicating unworthily is. A man communicates worthily, not when he merits the sacrament, but when he is meet for it. So a man communicates unworthily, when he is unmeet for this holy ordinance, when he wants a gospel-fitness for it. To find out this then, we must enquire into the nature of this ordinance. Consider, then,

*First,* The author of this ordinance. It is Christ, 1 Cor. xi. 23. He appointed it. It belongs to him only to appoint the several parts of worship, who was faithful in his own house as a Son; and worship commanded by men is but vain worship. Now, if Christ be the author of this ordinance, then it is meet, 1. That we have an honourable respect for it as a divine ordinance. 2. That we go about it out of a respect to the command of Christ. 3. That we expect the blessing and the advantage by it from him.

1. People communicate unworthily when they have not an honourable respect for, and a due reverence to, this ordinance, when they partake of it, Mal i. 6, 7. If it bear the stamp of divine authority, is it meet that persons should despise it, and not be touched with reverence of it?

When the angel of the covenant appeared to Moses in the bush, he said to him, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground,' Exod. iii. 5. But, behold, in this sacrament there are bread and wine of deeper sanctification than that holy ground, they being the symbols of Christ's body and blood.

2. When people do not go about it out of respect to the command of Christ, may he not justly astonish such at his table with that question, 'If I be master, where is my fear?' Mal. i. 6. Is it meat that people should communicate out of custom, vain-glory, &c.? If the sense of his command do not bring thee there, thou canst not expect the sense of his love, but rather to feel the weight of his hand, when there. As we must believe the truth because God has said it, otherwise our assent is not divine faith; so we must do our duty because God has commanded it, otherwise our obedience is not acceptable to him.

3. When people look to any other quarter than to Christ for the good of the sacrament. Some look no further than the elements. This is to put them in Christ's stead: but be not deceived, bread and wine cannot nourish thy soul. Some are apt to look to ministers: and if such a one as they affect serve the table they are at, they think they are sure of advantage. If they knew your hearts so led aside, they would, with a sad heart and angry countenance, say to you as Jacob did to Rachel, 'Am I in God's stead?' Gen. xxx. 2. The spouse went a little further than the watchmen before she found her beloved, Cant. iii.

4. Many smart by this respecting particular ministers, and overlooking the Master of this ordinance.

*Secondly*, Consider the time of the institution; 'The same night in which he was betrayed, by Judas, when the hour and power of darkness was approaching. If so, then it appears that this sacrament was left us as a token by our dying friend. He was now to go out of the world to the Father; but before he goes, he will leave his people a feast and token of love. Did he not know what was abiding him? Yes, verily he knew all. O then might not the prospect of the agony and bloody drops in the garden, the wracking of his body, and the load of wrath under which

his soul was to wrestle, have made him mind himself and forget us? Nay, in the night in which he was betrayed, he instituted this sacrament. Surely then it is most suitable, 1. That we prize it highly as the love-token of a dying friend. 2. That we be at pains to prepare to keep the tryst which he was so concerned to set. 3. That at such a time we avenge the treachery upon our lusts. So they partake unworthily,

1. Who partake of this ordinance without a due valuing of it as the love-token of a dying Lord. A token from a friend, though it be small in itself, yet ought to be prized; a token from a dying friend more; but a token from a friend dying for us most of all; and he would be reckoned a monster of men, that would not highly value it. Not to value this ordinance highly, and so to desire and delight in it, as many communicants do, who, if they could get their credit kept, could well live without it, and in their unconcernedness of heart for it and about it, say practically, The table of the Lord is contemptible, is to trample upon our dying Lord's love-token, and to say in effect, He should have been otherwise taken up that night in which he was betrayed.

2. Those communicants who are not at pains to prepare to keep the tryst our Lord set at that time. I may say, he forgot to eat his own bread, that he might provide for us. He did not so mind the cup of wrath which he was to get himself, as to forget the sacramental cup for our comfort: When he was on the cross, he trysts to meet the believing thief in heaven; and when the clouds of wrath were gathering, and ready to pour down upon him, he trysts to meet believers on earth. And shall we forget the tryst set in that remarkable night? But, ah! how many are there that will not be at pains to prepare for this ordinance, to examine themselves as to their state, frame, &c.? They have built up mountains and walls of separation betwixt Christ and them, but are at no pains to remove them, nor to employ Christ to level them. Do not these communicate unworthily?

3. Who do not avenge the treachery. How came Judas to betray him? Was it not the sins of his own people that were the spring of the unhappy action? Your sins



were the chief traitors. Then sure Christ instituting this sacrament at this time, says in effect concerning our lusts, as Psal. cxxxvii. 7, 8, 9; ‘Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom, in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof. O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed: happy shall he be that rewardeth thee, as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.’ Can a worthy communicant partake of this ordinance, and mind the treachery his Lord met with, and not break his covenant with his lusts, and renounce his old master? No, surely. They communicate unworthily who come to this ordinance at peace with any lust; they re-act Judas’ sin-kiss of Christ, and betray him.

*Thirdly*, Consider what is represented by the sacred symbols in this ordinance. The broken bread and wine represents Christ’s broken body, and his shed blood, Christ suffering for sinners. He is sacramentally crucified before our eyes in that ordinance. Now, if the bread and wine represents to us Christ’s body broken for us, and his blood shed for us, it is meet that, in communicating, 1. We meditate believingly on these sufferings. 2. That our hearts be inflamed with love to him. 3. That they be filled with sorrow for and hatred of sin. Then,

1. They communicate unworthily, who do not in their partaking meditate believingly on the sufferings of Christ. Christ will ask that question at communicants, Matth. xvi. 15. ‘Whom say ye that I am?’ And I would ask beforehand, Do ye believe that Jesus the Son of Mary, who was crucified betwixt two thieves without the gates of Jerusalem, was the Son of God, the only Saviour of the world, and that Christ? Do ye believe that Christ suffered? If ye do indeed believe it aright, I say, as Matth. xvi. 17. ‘Blessed art thou: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but *Christ’s* Father which is in heaven.’ And sure I am, if ye do believe, ye cannot shun to meditate on it at the sacrament. This wonderful sight will dazzle your eyes; a sight of God suffering will blind your eyes as to other objects, and make you retire into yourself, to see and wonder, and with admiration to think on this terrible sight. Do they not act most unworthily here who

are not thus taken up? What would ye have said of Moses, had he not turned aside to see that great sight, the bush burning, yet not consumed? *Exod. iii.* Had ye been on Mount Calvary, within hearing of Christ's dying groans, within sight of his pierced, mangled, and racked body, and had unconcernedly turned your back, and passed all without notice, would ye not say, he had been just had he turned you off that place quick into hell? Here ye have the same sight; and if ye behold it unconcernedly, ye act a most unworthy part, and oppose yourselves to the most direful effects of his vengeance.

2. Who communicate without love to Christ in exercise. Here is represented a king's son in love with a beggar, loving her, and dying for her. O miserable miscreant! does not this affect thy heart, who art this beggar? Can there be greater love? *John xv. 13.* What hellish cold has frozen thy affections, that this fire cannot warm, nay, melt them! What a heart of a devil hast thou, that Christ, in his glorious apparel, his red garments, cannot captivate? Be astonished, O heavens, be horribly afraid; tremble, O earth; rent, O rocks; be struck blind, O glorious sun in the firmament, when ye see the communicants sitting without love to Christ, when he is sacramentally lying before them, broken, wounded, and pierced with the envenomed arrows of God's curse, and all for them!

3. Who communicate impenitently. Have ye pierced him? How unworthy will ye be, if ye do not 'look upon him whom ye have pierced, and mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son, and be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born,' *Zech. xii. 10.* Will ye come to the table without the tear in your eye? O! unworthy communicants, what has petrified your hearts, turned you into stones harder than the adamant, which the blood of the goat will dissolve? Christ's dying groans rent the rocks, and raised and alarmed the dead; and wilt thou sit stupid? Where sorrow for sin and hatred of it is wanting at a communion-table, there is eating and drinking judgment, which, when it begins to work within you, will make you mourn bitterly, either here or in hell.

*Fourthly,* Consider the bread and the wine is offered and given to you at the table of the Lord, in token of Christ's

offering himself to you, with all his benefits, 1 Cor. x. 16; and your taking of both, eating and drinking, declares your acceptance of the offer and application of Christ to your souls. Surely then it is meet, 1. That ye believe that Christ is willing to be yours. 2. That ye do sincerely and cordially accept of the offer.

1. They are unworthy communicants who partake doubting of Christ's willingness to be theirs, with all his saving benefits. Will ye not believe him when he gives you a sealed declaration of his mind? To doubt of this is, to say he is but mocking and solemnly cheating you; so that no wonder we say 'He that doubteth is damned if he eat.' What though ye be most unworthy? he stands not on that. Though your sins be many, the sea of his blood can drain them all, Isa. i. 18. Mic. vii. 18. If the devil get in thus far on you, it will be an error in the first concoction; and till ye get over it, it is impossible to communicate aright, or get good of the sacrament.

2. Who taking the elements, yet do not take Christ by faith. Then it may be said, as John i. 11. 'He came unto his own, and his own received him not.' Is the bread or cup offered to you, then? by that Christ says, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in, Psal. xxiv. 7. Therefore we ought to set our hearts wide open, clasp him in the arms of faith, embrace and welcome him into our souls. To take the bread in your mouths, and yet to hold Christ out of your hearts, is to put a solemn cheat upon the King of glory, which will bring upon you the curse of the deceiver, Mal. i. 14. 'which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing;' and the cheat will be discovered, if ye repent not, before the whole assembled world at the great day, to your everlasting confusion. This is to betray Christ, with a witness. Either, then, meddle not with these sacramental symbols, or take him by faith. And if ye take him, ye must let your lusts go.

*Fifthly*, Consider this ordinance is a seal of the new covenant, 1 Cor. xi. 25. 'This cup is the new testament in my blood.' Christ has covenanted and left in his testament to his people all things necessary for them. His word



in itself is sufficient security; but guilt is a fountain of fears; and we are guilty, and therefore fearful souls. And therefore, that it may be more sure to us, he has appended this seal. It is meet then, 1. That they be in the covenant who partake. 2. That we take the sacrament as a seal of God's covenant to us. 3. That we believe more firmly.

1. They are unworthy communicants who are not in covenant with God, and yet come to his table. It is a profaning of God's seal to set it to a blank. It is a feast for friends, not for enemies, Cant. v. 1; and if ye come in a state of enmity, ye can expect no kind entertainment; 'For can two walk together except they be agreed?' Amos iii. 3; yea, ye will get a sad welcome, such as the man got who wanted the wedding-garment, Matth. xxii. 11, 12. If there be not a mutual consent, it is no marriage; and if there be no marriage, ye have nothing ado with the marriage-feast.

2. They that use it as a seal of their covenant with God, and not of God's covenant with them. Surely the sacrament is an obligatory ordinance to obedience; but this is not the principal end of it, but rather to be a seal of God's covenant with us. The reason why so many afterwards appear to have been unworthy communicants, is, that they go to that ordinance rather to oblige themselves to obedience, than to get a full covenant sealed to them for obedience. All our strength lies in Christ; and worthy communicants go to Christ in the sacrament to get influences of grace secured to them under his own seal, that they may in time of need afterwards know what quarter to betake themselves to for supply.

3. They whose faith of the benefits of the covenant is not more confirmed. This is to sit down at the table, but not to taste of the meat that is set thereon. Why does the Lord give us such encouragement, and yet we grow never a whit stronger in faith; and though he give us new confirmations, yet we have never a whit more confidence in him? Would not a man think himself affronted to be thus treated?

*Sixthly*, Consider this ordinance is appointed for strengthening of our souls, for the nourishing of the Lord's people,

and their growth in grace. It is a supper, a feast where Christ is both maker and matter, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed. The Lord's people must needs have food to nourish the new man, and grace will decay unless it be recruited. If this be so, then it is meet, 1. That communicants be spiritually alive. 2. That they actually feed spiritually at this holy table.

1. Graceless souls must needs communicate unworthily. Where there is no grace there can be no strengthening of it. There can be no communion betwixt a holy God and an unholy sinner, Prov. xv. 8. God will not make Nebuchadnezzar's image of mystical Christ. We must be born from above ere we can be capable to feed on Heaven's dainties. It was the custom of Egypt, not of Canaan, to bring dead men to feasts. They are rather to be buried out of God's sight. An unregenerate soul at the Lord's table is a monster that hath not a hand to take his meat, nor a mouth to eat it, nor a stomach to digest it, Heb. xi. 6; and all that can be expected, is, that he will come away twice dead. Therefore, 'examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

2. They that do not actually feed at this table; for which cause grace in exercise is necessary. He is an unworthy guest that does not eat his meat. It is dangerous to be in a spiritual sleep at the Lord's table; therefore the church prays, Psal. lxxx. 18. 'Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name'. Now, the food set before us there is Christ's body and blood, John vi. 55.; that is, Christ himself as crucified for our sins. By faith we feed upon him; faith realiseth the sufferings of Christ; it looks upon Christ as the common treasury of all grace, as the principle of life, and root of holiness. It eyes the promise for the conveyance of grace into our souls; looks on the sacrament as the golden pipes conveying the golden oil; and thus applies Christ, his merits and benefits to the soul, getting into his wounds, the clefts of that rock that was smitten to give nourishment.

*Seventhly*, It is appointed for the remembrance of Christ. Christ is gone to heaven; and his people are apt to forget

him. This ordinance is a memorial of his death, and herein he is to be remembered. If so, then it is meat, 1. That they who sit down at his table know him ; for there can be no remembering without knowledge of and acquaintance with him. 2. That he be remembered gratefully.

1. Those partake unworthily who are ignorant persons, and are unacquainted with Christ. Those that have been always blind, cannot remember the light. Ignorant souls will, as blind men, deal blows at the Lord's table, making themselves guilty of the body and blood of Christ. It is not only necessary that we have the knowledge of the principles of religion, but that we be taught the same by the Spirit, and in conversion be acquainted with the Master of this feast. Ignorant people cannot discern the Lord's body.

2. Who do not remember him affectionately. To remember his dying love is our great work ; to remember how seasonably he undertook the work of saving sinners, Psal. xl. 7 ; how faithfully he performed all, how willingly and constantly he obeyed and suffered. What do men sit down at the Lord's table for, if they neglect this ? And this cannot be done aright, but the soul will be suitably affected.

*Lastly,* It is appointed to be a sign and token of the communion of saints, to signify, not only our communion with Christ, but with one another ; not only our union with Christ by faith, but with one another by love, 1 Cor. x. 17. It is meet, then, that we sit down at this table in love.

They partake, then, unworthily who sit down at this table with malice and envy in their hearts against others, Matth. v. 24, 25. If we forgive not others their injuries to us, God will not forgive us. This leaven must be purged out, if we would be a holy lump. Some will make a fashion of reconciliation before the sacrament ; and when that is over, they are just as they were before : but God will not be mocked.

II. The next general head is to shew, what judgments unworthy communicating exposes people to. It exposes them,



1. To bodily strokes, as the Corinthians felt, 1 Cor: xi. 30. 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. One falls into a decay of strength, another takes sickness after a communion, another slips off the stage. Some give one reason for it, and some another. But, O! unworthy communicating is often the procuring cause of all. What a dreadful distemper seized Belshazzar when he was abusing the vessels of the temple! Dan. v; but the sin of unworthy communicating is more dreadful.

2. To spiritual strokes, strokes upon the soul, blindness of mind, hardness of heart, searedness of conscience, &c. The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain; he will let guilt lie on him. Hence some after communions are let fall into scandalous sins; some meet with greater darkness and deadness than ever before, and some with sharp desertions.

3. To eternal strokes. As to such as are out of Christ, unworthy communicating will damn them, as well as gross sins in the life and outward conversation, and no doubt will make a hotter hell than that of Pagans. Murder is a crying sin, but the murder of the Son of God is most dreadful, and the Mediator's vengeance is most terrible.

And they are said to *eat and drink judgment to themselves*; which I conceive, imports,

1. That the hurt which comes by unworthy communicating comes upon the person himself, not on Christ, whose body and blood he is guilty of; for *themselves* has a relation not to others, but to Christ. They may eat judgment to ministers and fellow communicants, if they have a sinful hand in bringing them to the table. Only, though the slight is given to Christ, yet it rebounds upon the man himself, and lies heavy on him with its consequences. They do interpretatively murder Christ, in so far as they abuse the symbols of his broken body and shed blood; but they can do him no harm; they kick against the pricks, which run into their bodies and souls.

2. That they themselves are the authors of their own ruin. They take their death with their own hand, like a man that wilfully drinks of a cup of poison, and so murder

their own souls. And O what a dreadful thing is this for a man to perish by his own hands !

3. That they shall be as sure of judgment upon them for their sin, if repentance prevent it not, and cut the thread, as they are of the sacramental bread they eat, and the wine they drink. Death is in the cup to them, and it will go down with the elements into their bowels.

USE. Beware then of unworthy communicating. Profane not the holy things of God by your rash approaches to this ordinance. If the love of the Lord Jesus will not allure you to a conscientious performance of this duty in a holy manner, let the terror of God affright you. Behold life and death is set before you. Venture not on the sword-point of vengeance, even the vengeance of his temple. O sinner ! hold thy hand. Do not wound the Lord of glory, and bring innocent blood on thy head. O wound not your own souls with the wound of an enemy ! Provoke not God to give you blood to drink.

*Object.* 1. We had better bide aback than run such a risk. *Ans.* If you cannot think on parting with your lusts, but you must either communicate keeping them still, or not at all, then assure yourselves, God will avenge this contempt of himself and his Son upon you, and ye shall fall into the hands of the living God through eternity, Luke xix. 27. If ye think of being better disposed afterwards, ye deceive yourselves ; for the longer ye keep your sins, it will be the harder to part with them. And who knows if ever your eyes may see another such occasion ? But if ye mind to part with your sins now, and be in earnest for communion with God in that ordinance, then ye will make conscience of, and sincerely endeavour worthy communicating, which will be accepted ; for it is a gospel, not a legal fitness, that we urge.

*Object.* 2. But that terror confounds me when I think of approaching the Lord's table, lest he be provoked to strike me dead on the spot, or I get my damnation sealed. *Ans.* Satan labours either to make us feed without fear, or else to fear so as we cannot feed. But look ye to God through the vail of the flesh of Christ, and so you will see an atoned and pacified God. If such fear seize thee, then

acknowledge God is just if he should do to you as you fear : but because you need a Saviour, and he has commanded you to accept of him, take him, though with a trembling hand ; and having nothing to bring with you, come to get all. Say, Lord, if thou shouldst confound me before all the people, thou art just ; but I plead mercy through Christ ; and if thou wilt give me thy grace, I am content to be a monument of grace. I have nothing, but I am content to be thy debtor for all. And so you will find a reviving.

I shall only say, 1. Examine yourselves as to your state, your frame, your graces, your wants, &c. and know how matters stand with you. Take a look of your former ways, and turn to the Lord with your whole heart.

2. Put away the strange gods that are among you. Look what sin has been indulged, and let this be the parting time ; for one leak will sink the ship, Psal. lxvi. 18.

3. Employ Christ for suitable preparation. Use the means, but look to him alone for the blessing.

4. *Lastly*, Do this work that ye would do if ye were to die on the communion-sabbath. *Sacramentum et articulus mortis æquiparantur*. In death we go to Christ, in the sacrament he comes to us : And who knows but some of us may get our provision there for another world, either in mercy or in wrath ? But happy they who set themselves for dying furniture.



THE NATURE OF PRAYER.

EPH. vi. 18.—*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints.*

**P**RAYER is a duty of natural religion, and by God's appointment is one of the chief means by which Christ communicates the benefits of redemption to sinners; and this important duty is enjoined in these words. In which we have,

1. The duty itself, *praying*. This is recommended and enjoined to all, as ever they would stand, and not be ruined by their spiritual enemies.

2. The amplification of this weighty subject; where notice,

(1.) The time of it, *always*, or at every season. We must always be in a praying frame, and miss no season wherein God calls for it, but in every season of prayer be praying, 2 Sam. ix. 7.

(2.) The kinds of prayer, *all prayer*, i. e. all sorts of prayer, public, private, secret, ordinary, extraordinary, &c. petitioning prayer, for good things, here called *prayer* in a strict sense; supplicatory prayer, deprecating evils, called *supplication*.

(3.) The manner of prayer. [1.] It must be *in the Spirit*; not with the lip, tongue, and memory only, but with the heart, or inward man, or rather by the Spirit of God, with his assistance. [2.] With *watchfulness*, keeping the soul in a wakerife disposition for it, and in it, that the heart wander not. [3.] *With all perseverance*, continuing instant in it, whatever may occur to discourage us.

4. Those we are to pray for, *all saints*; not only for

ourselves, but others, especially, though not only, for the children of God.

The text affords the following doctrine.

DOCT. 'Prayer is a duty always necessary to be performed in the several kinds of it, and in the right manner, and in which we are to be concerned, not only for ourselves, but for others.'

To discover the nature of prayer, which in our Catechism is said to be 'an offering up of our desires to God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies,' I will consider the parts of prayer in general, and in particular.

I. Prayer, generally considered, consists of three parts.

1. Petition, or prayer strictly and properly so called, whereby one desires of God the supply of one's wants, begs the good necessary for himself or others, and deprecates evil inflicted or feared. *Praying always with all prayer, &c.*

2. Confession of sin, Dan. ix. 4. It is so very natural that sinners coming to God to ask mercies should make confession, that it is a very necessary part of the sinner's prayer; and prayer is so called, Neh. ix. 3. And the deeper one is in confession, he readily speeds the better in prayer.

3. Thanksgiving for mercies, Phil. iv. 6. God prevents us with his benefits, we are deep in his debt, ere we come to ask of him; and therefore it is necessary that thanksgiving have a place in our prayers. And it also is called 'praying,' Luke xviii. 11.

II. Let us consider the parts of prayer in particular. These are,

1. Prayer properly so called, or petition.

2. Confession of our sins.

3. Thanksgiving for mercies.

FIRST, Prayer properly so called, or petition.

Here I shall shew,

1. Wherein the formal nature of prayer consists,

2. To whom we are to pray.

3. In whose name we are to pray.
4. By whose assistance acceptable prayer is performed.
5. For whom we must pray.
6. For what we are to pray.
7. How we are to pray, if we would pray rightly and acceptably.
8. Whether all such prayers are accepted, heard, &c.

FIRST, Wherein does the formal nature of prayer consist? It lies precisely in offering up our desires to God, for things that we need. It is a motion of our hearts towards God, to move him as it were to look favourably on us, Psal. lxii. 8. a pouring out our heart before the Lord; a lifting our soul to him, Psal. xxv. 1. a presenting our supplications to him, as petitioners, Dan. ix. 18.

We command our inferiors, we demand of our equals; we may by some deed of our own lay an obligation on, and some way excite an inclination in, any man, even our superior, to help us; but none of these ways can work with God. What then remains but a religious and submissive offering of our desires to God, for his help, who knows our hearts? And this is what we call prayer. Hence,

1. There may be prayer made to God without words. The desires of the heart offered to God though not clothed with words, is prayer, truly and properly so called, Exod. xiv. 15. Words are not necessary from the nature of prayer, but on the account of ourselves, to affect us the more, and to honour God with our bodies as well as our souls.

2. There can be no prayer, properly so called, without the desires of the heart going out to God. Prayer without intention, says the Jews, is like a body without a soul. A flourish of the best chosen words, without suitable affections going along with them, is not prayer before the Lord, but the carcase of prayer, wanting the soul and life.

SECONDLY, To whom we are to pray? We are to pray to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and to God only; not to saints, angels, nor any creature whatsoever. For,

1. Prayer is an eminent part of religious worship, Joel ii. 32. and religious worship is only to be given to God, Matth. iv. 10. 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God,



and him only shalt thou serve.' The holy angels refuse it, Rev. xxii. 8, 9. and the saints also, as in the case of Peter, Acts x. 25, 26.

2. The object of prayer and faith are the very same, Rom. x. 14. For the ground of prayer is faith. Therefore, since we are to believe in God, and not in the creature, we must pray to him only. So our Lord directs us, 'Our Father, which art in heaven.'

3. Because God only is qualified (if I may so speak) for hearing of prayer. He only is able to search the heart and know it, 1 Kings viii. 39. He only is omnipresent to hear every where, Psal. lxxv. 2. He only can pardon the sins, and fulfil the desires of his people, Psal. cxlv. 18, 19.

THIRDLY, In whose name are we to pray? In the name of Jesus Christ, and of no other, neither saint nor angel, John xiv. 13. 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, *says he*, that will I do.' We must go to the Father, not in the name of any of the courtiers, Col. ii. 18. but in the name of his Son, the only Mediator, 1 Tim. ii. 5. Here consider,

1. What it is to pray in the name of Christ.

2. Why we must pray in his name.

*First*, Let us consider what it is to pray in the name of Christ.

1. Negatively. It is not a bare faithless mentioning of his name in our prayers, nor concluding our prayers therewith, Matth. vii. 21. The saints use the words, 'through Jesus Christ our Lord,' 1 Cor. xv. 57. but often is that scabbard produced, while the sword of the Spirit is not in it. The words are said, but the faith is not exercised.

2. Positively. To pray in the name of Christ is to pray,  
1st, At his command, to go to God by his order, John xvi. 24. 'Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name, *says he*: ask, and ye shall receive.' Christ as God commands all men to pray, to offer that piece of natural duty to God; but that is not the command meant. But Christ as Mediator sends his own to his Father to ask supply of their wants, and allows them to tell that he sent them, as one recommends a poor body to a friend, John xvi. 24. just cited. So to pray in the name of Christ is to go to God as sent by the poor man's friend. So it imports,

(1.) The souls being come to Christ in the first place, John xv. 7. 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' He that would pray aright, must do as those who made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend first, and then made their suite to their king, Acts xii. 20.

(2.) The soul's taking its encouragement to pray from Jesus Christ, Heb. iv. 14.—16. 'Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' The way to the throne in heaven is blocked up by our sins. And sinners have no confidence to seek the Lord. Jesus Christ came down from heaven, died for the criminals, and gathers them to himself by effectual calling. He, as having all interest with his Father, bids them go to his Father in his name, and ask what they need, assuring them of acceptance. And from thence they take their encouragement, viz. from his promises in the word. And he gives them his token with them, which the Father will own, and that is his own Spirit, Rom. viii. 26, 27. 'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.'

2dly, It is to direct our prayers to God through Jesus Christ, Heb. vii. 25. 'Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' Chap. xiii. 15. 'By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name;' depending wholly on Christ's merit and intercession for access, acceptance, and a gracious return.

(1.) Depending on Christ for access to God, Eph. iii.

12. 'In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence by the faith of him.' There is no access to God but through him, John xiv. 6. 'No man cometh unto the Father but by me.' They that attempt otherwise to come unto God, will get the door thrown in their face. But we must take hold of the Mediator, and come in at his back, who is the Secretary of heaven.

(2.) Depending on him for acceptance of our prayers, Eph. i. 6. 'He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.' Our Lord Christ is the only altar that can sanctify our gift. If one lay the stress of the acceptance of his prayers on his frame, enlargement, tenderness, &c. the prayer will not be accepted. A crucified Christ only can bear the weight of the acceptance of either our persons or performances.

(3.) Depending on him for a gracious return, 1 John v. 14. 'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.' No prayers are heard and answered but for the Mediator's sake; and whatever petitions agreeable to God's will are put up to God, in this dependence, are heard.

*Secondly,* Why must we pray in the name of Christ? The reason of this may be taken up in these two things.

1. There is no access for a sinful creature to God without a Mediator, Isa. lix. 2. John xiv. 6. Sin has set us at a distance from God, and has bolted the door of our access to him, that it is beyond our power, or that of any creature, to open it for us. His justice staves off the criminal, his holiness the unclean creature, without there be an acceptable person to go betwixt him and us. Our God is a consuming fire: and so there is no immediate access for a sinner to him.

2. And there is none appointed nor fit for that work but Christ, 1 Tim. ii. 5. It is he alone who is our great High Priest. None but he has satisfied justice for our sins. And as he is the only Mediator of redemption, so he is the only Mediator of intercession, 1 John ii. 1. 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' The sweet savour of his merit only is capable to procure acceptance to our prayers, in themselves unsavoury, Rev. viii. 3, 4.

FOURTHLY, By whose assistance is acceptable prayer



performed? By the help of the Holy Spirit, Gal. iv. 6. Rom. viii. 26. There are two sorts of prayers. (1.) A prayer wrought out by virtue of a gift of knowledge and utterance. This is bestowed on many reprobates, and that gift may be useful to others, and to the church. But as it is merely of that sort, it is not accepted, nor does Christ put it in before the Father for acceptance. For, (2.) There is a prayer wrought in men by virtue of the Holy Spirit, Zech. xii. 10. ‘I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications:’ and that is the only acceptable prayer to God, Jam. v. 16. *effectual*, Gr. *interwrought*. The right praying is praying in the Spirit. It is a gale blowing from heaven, the breathing of the Spirit in the saints, that carries them out in the prayer, which comes the length of the throne. Now, the Spirit helps to pray,

1. As a teaching and instructing Spirit, affording proper matter of prayer, causing us to know what we pray for, Rom. viii. 26. forecited; enlightening the mind in the knowledge of our needs, and those of others; bringing into our remembrance these things, suggesting them to us according to the word, together with the promises of God, on which prayer is grounded, John xiv. 26. ‘The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost,—shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.’ Hence it is that the saints are sometimes carried out in prayer for things which they had no view of before, and carried by some things they had.

2. As a quickening, exciting Spirit, Rom. viii. 26; the Spirit qualifying the soul with praying graces and affections, working in the praying person sense of needs, faith, fervency, humility, &c. Psal. x. 17. ‘Thou wilt prepare their heart.’ The man may go to his knees in a very unprepared frame for prayer, yet the Spirit blowing, he is helped. It is for this reason the Spirit is said to *make intercession* for us, namely, in so far as he teaches and quickens, puts us in a praying frame, and draws our petitions, as it were, which the Mediator presents.

This praying with the help of the Spirit is peculiar to the saints, Jam. v. 16; yet they have not that help at all times, nor always in the same measure; for sometimes the Spirit,

being provoked, departs, and they are left in a withered condition. So there is great need to look for a breathing, and pant for it, when we are to go to duty: for if there be not a gale, we will tug at the oars but heartlessly.

Let no man think that a readiness and volubility of expression in prayer, is always the effect of the Spirit's assistance. For that may be the product of a gift, and of the common operations of the Spirit, removing the impediment of the exercise of it. And it is evident one may be scarce of words, and have groans instead of them, while the Spirit helps him to pray, Rom. viii. 26. Neither is every flood of affections in prayer, the effect of the Spirit of prayer. There are of those which puff up a man, but make him never a whit more holy, tender in his walk, &c. But the influences of the Spirit never miss to be humbling but sanctifying. Hence says David, 'Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee,' 1 Chron. xxix. 14; and says the apostle, 'We have no confidence in the flesh,' Phil. iii. 3.

FIFTHLY, For whom must we pray?

*First, Negatively.*

1. Not for the dead. David ceased praying for his child when once dead, 2 Sam. xii. 21—23. It is vain and useless; for as the tree falls, it must lie. We have neither precept nor promise about it; and it was raised upon the false opinion of purgatory. But the dead are in an unalterable state, Heb. ix. 27. 'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.'

2. Nor for those who are known to have sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost, 1 John v. 16. for God has declared that sin to be unpardonable. This is very rare, and therefore one would beware of rashness in this matter.

*Secondly, Positively.*

1. In general, we are to pray for all sorts of men living, 'for kings, and all that are in authority,' 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. for Christians, Jews, Mahometans, Pagans, noble and ignoble, &c. They are capable of God's grace and favour, and we are to desire it for them. But we are not to pray for every particular person whatsoever, 1 John v. 16.

‘There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it.’ So that it is an unwarrantable petition, that God would have mercy on, and save all mankind; for the contrary of that is revealed. Yea, we should pray for all sorts of men who shall live hereafter, as our Lord did, John xvii. 20. ‘Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.’ But,

2. In particular, we are to pray, not only for ourselves, as Jacob did for deliverance from the hand of his brother Esau, Gen. xxxii. 11. but for,

(1.) The whole church of Christ upon earth. Hence says the text, *Praying always with all prayer,—and supplication for all saints.* To no party must we confine the communion of prayers, to whom God has not confined his grace. All the members of the mystical body must share particularly in our prayers, because they are the members of Christ, whatever difference be betwixt us and them in lesser things. The sympathy betwixt the members of the same body of our Lord requires this. And it is a sad sign not to be so affected, Amos vi. 6. ‘They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.’

(2.) Magistrates: ‘Kings, and all that are in authority,’ 1 Tim. ii. 2. It was about 300 years after Christ ere the magistrates were Christians, nevertheless the apostle bids pray for them; because the quiet and peace of the commonwealth and kingdom depends much on their management; and infidelity, or indifference in religion, does not make void the magistrates just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him. Their hearts are in the Lord’s hand, Prov. xxi. 1. Their influence is great, so is their work, and so are their temptations; and if they be evil men, there is the more need to be earnest with God on their behalf. Let us bless God that we have a Protestant King on the throne, remembering how seasonably the Lord sent him, and how much depends on his safety, and the safety of his royal family.

(2.) Ministers, Col. iv. 3. Psal. cxxxii. 9. There is a near relation betwixt the people of God and their ministers. They have a weighty work in their hands, which, if it misgive, will not only be their own loss, but the people’s. People may have a minister so straitened, as to do



them no good, Col. iv. 3. Though he be not so, yet he may be useless to them; therefore, says the apostle, 1 Thess. v. 25. 'Brethren, pray for us.' I leave it with that, Rom. xv. 30. 'Now I beseech you, brethren for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.'

(4.) Our Christian acquaintance, Jam. v. 16. 'Pray one for another.' Communion of prayers is a special benefit of Christian friendship and acquaintance. And it is no small mercy and encouragement to have interest in their prayers, who have interest at the throne of grace.

(5.) The place and congregation we live in, and are members of. The captives at Babylon were to pray for the place they lived in, Jer. xxix. 7. how much more should we pray for a Christian congregation whereof we are members? The better it be with them, it will be the better with you; and so contrariwise.

6. Our families and relations. The nearer any stand related to us, we have the more need to be concerned for them at the throne of grace. We find Job sacrificing for his family, Job i. 5. a master praying for his servant, 2 Kings vi. 17. and a servant for his master, Gen. xxiv. 12.

(7.) *Lastly*, We must pray for our enemies, Matth. v. 44. This is hardest to bring men to. But we have the express command of Christ for it, and his example, Luke xxiii. 34. followed by the martyr Stephen, Acts vii. 60. Nay, forgiving them is necessary to our forgiveness: 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.' There may be much selfishness in praying for those that love us; but that kindly concern for our enemies makes us liker God, Matth. v. 45.

SIXTHLY, For what are we to pray?

We are to pray for things agreeable to God's revealed will, and for such things only, 1 John v. 14. 'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.' We may not present unto God unlawful desires, nor petitions, in favour of our lust, Jam. iv. 3. These must needs be an abomination, and a daring affront to a holy God. And indeed wicked things are so much the more wicked, as they are brought into our addresses to a holy God.

The matter of our prayers must be regulated by the word of God, wherein he has shewn what is pleasing to him, and what is not so. The signification of God's will and good pleasure as to the good to be bestowed on men, and our prayers, are to be of equal extent. Wherefore, let us see that whatever we pray for be within the compass of the command or the promise.

Such are all things tending to the glory of God, Matth. vi. 9. or to the welfare of the church, Psal. cxxii. 6; to our own good, temporal, spiritual, or eternal, Matth. vii. 11; or that of others, Psal. cxxv. 4.

SEVENTHLY, How are we to pray, if we would pray rightly and acceptably?

1. Understandingly, understanding what we say, 1 Cor. xiv. 15. Therefore they must be in a known tongue. And to repeat words before God, while we know not what they mean, can never be prayer indeed.

2. Reverently, Eccl. v. 1. We must maintain an outward reverence in expression, voice, and gesture; since in prayer we are before the great God: an inward reverence especially, having an awful apprehension of the majesty of God before whom we appear, Psal. lxxxix. 7. Heb. xii. 28. Fear and trembling becomes a creature, much more a guilty creature, before a holy God. And fearless presumptuous addresses to God are the produce of a hard heart.

3. Humbly, Psal. x. 17. with a deep sense of our own unworthiness and sinfulness on our spirits. In prayer we come to beg, not to buy or demand our right, and therefore should be sensible of unworthiness, Gen. xxxii. 10; and the more grace, the more unworthy will we be in our own eyes, Gen. xviii. 27. And going to God, we must turn our eyes inward, with the Publican (Luke xviii. 14), on our own evils of heart and life.

4. Feelingly, being deeply affected with a sense of our needs, like the prodigal, Luke xv. 17, 18, 19. Alas! what does it avail to go to God with an insensible heart; to sit down at his table without spiritual hunger; to come to his door rich and increased with goods, in our own conceit! Such are sent empty away. Therefore it is a piece of very necessary preparation for prayer, to look over our wants, ere we go to prayer.

5. Believingly, Matth. xxi. 22. 'All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.' He who prays acceptably must be endued with saving faith, Heb. xi. 6. An unbeliever cannot pray acceptably, Rom. x. 14. Hence the prayers of the unrenewed man are all lost in respect of gracious acceptance. Moreover, the believer must be in the exercise of faith in prayer, which must be mixed with faith.

One must have a faith of particular confidence in prayer, as to the things prayed for, Mark xi. 24, 'What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall receive them.' For where that is altogether wanting, the prayer can never be accepted, Jam. i. 6. 'Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.' Since it must needs be highly dishonouring to God, to come to him to ask, without any expectation from, or trust in him, as to what is asked.

*Quest.* How may one have that faith? *Ans.* By applying the promises, and believing them. If the things be absolutely necessary, the promise makes these very things sure to them who come to God through Christ for them, as peace, pardon, &c. If they be not, then the promise secures God's doing the best, that either he will give the very thing desired, or what is as good. And we are to believe accordingly.

6. Sincerely, Psal. cxlv. 18. Hypocrisy and dissimulation in prayer, when the heart goes not along with the lips, mars the acceptance of prayers. There are feigned lips Psal. xvii. 1. when the affections do not keep pace with the words in prayer: when sin is confessed, but the heart not humbled under it; petitions are put up, but no serious desire of the things asked. See Jer. xxix. 13.

7. Fervently, Jam. v. 16. Cold, lifeless, and formal prayers, are not of the right stamp. We should, as in a most weighty matter, be boiling hot, Rom. xii. 11. Importunity in prayer is most pleasing to God. It consists not in a multitude of words, Matth. vi. 7; but in a holy earnestness of heart to be heard, Psal. cxliii. 7; and pleading with the Lord, by allowable arguments, as one who is in deep earnest, Job xxiii. 4. A heart warmed by a live-coal from God's altar will produce this.

8. Watchfully, *watching unto prayer*, as in the text;



taking heed to our spirits, that they do not wander. Wandering thoughts in prayer mar many prayers. They come on like the fowls on the carcase, and will devour it, if not driven away. A carnal frame of heart is the mother of them, and rash indeliberate approaches to God help them forward.

In that case one should be like the builders of the wall, having the trowel in the one hand, and the sword in the other, resolutely to resist vain thoughts, and refuse to harbour them. Nay, turn the cannon on the enemy, consider them as affording new matter of humiliation, and a clamant occasion of plying the throne of grace more closely. If they be striven against, they will not mar your acceptance; but if not they will.

9. Perseveringly; *watching thereunto with all perseverance*, as in the text. When we have tabled our suit before the throne, we must not let it fall, but insist upon it, Luke xviii. 1. Hold on, with one petition, one prayer, on the back of another, till it be granted, Isa. lxii. 1. ‘In due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not.’

*Lastly*, Dependingly, waiting upon the Lord with humble submission to his holy will, and looking for an answer, Micah vii. 7. We must come away in a waiting depending frame. No wonder those prayers be not regarded which we never look after, and are not concerned for the answer of.

EIGHTHLY, Are all such prayers accepted, heard, and answered?

1. An unrenewed man cannot thus pray, neither are such a one’s prayers at any time accepted, Prov. xv. 8. ‘The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,’ John ix. 31. ‘God heareth not sinners.’

2. God’s own people do not always thus pray, neither are all their prayers accepted. For, says the Psalmist, Psal. lxvi. 18. ‘If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.’

3. But all such prayers, being the produce of God’s Spirit in the saints, are presented by the Mediator; and are accepted, heard, and answered by the Father, though not presently answered, Psal. xxii. 2. yet they shall be answered in due time, either by granting the very thing desired, 1 John v. 15. or something as good, Gen. xvii. 18, 19, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

SECONDLY, The second parts of prayer is confession of our sins. Here we shall shew,

1. What sins we are to confess.
2. The necessity of confession.
3. How we are to confess sin.

*First*, The sins we are to confess are, original and actual sins, sins of omission, commission, heart, lip, and life, Psal. li. 4, 5. In a word, all our sins, so far as we are capable, (for 'who can understand his errors?' Psal. xix. 12.) but especially those which must wound the conscience, we are to be particular in, with their aggravations.

*Secondly*, Let us consider the necessity of confession. (1.) It is necessary to clear the Lord's justice in proceeding against us, Psal. li. 4. 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.' (2.) The nature of the thing requires it, in order to obtain pardoning mercy, Prov. xxviii. 13. 'Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy.'

*Thirdly*, How are we to confess sin?

1. Fully, without hiding of any thing wilfully, Prov. xxviii. 13. 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper.' God knows all our sins, and all the circumstances of them! so that it is in vain to mince our confession, and it speaks a heart not duly humbled.

2. Freely and voluntarily, pouring out the heart like water, and not merely making the confession as extorted. Whenever grace touches the heart, it will make it come freely away.

3. Sincerely, confessing it with shame, sorrow, hatred of it, and a real purpose of reformation; otherwise it is but a mock confession.

THIRDLY, The third part of prayer is thanksgiving for mercies. Here I shall shortly shew,

1. What is the matter of this thanksgiving,
2. The necessity of it.
3. How we should give thanks.

*First*, The matter of it is,

1. Spiritual mercies, Eph. i. 3. These are mercies for our souls, and lead to everlasting happiness; and therefore are most to be prized. They challenge the warmest and

the most grateful acknowledgements from all who have received them.

2. Temporal mercies from the womb till now, Psal. cxxxix. 14. These call for the most thankful acknowledgements every day, for they are new every morning. And we ought to be thankful for mercies conferred, not only on ourselves, but also on others, particular persons or societies. So did the apostle as to Philemon, Phil. ver. 4. 'I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers.' And so he did as to the Philippians, chap. i. 3. 'I thank my God, upon every remembrance of you.'

*Secondly*, Let us consider the necessity of thanksgiving.

1. It is all that we can render to God for good or benefits received, Hos. xiv. 2. namely, to acknowledge debt, and be thankful. Ingratitude among men is reckoned a great sin and scandal, and fixes an odious character on the person; but how much greater a sin and scandalous offence is it to be unthankful to God for the mercies which we enjoy, and that we never deserved at his bountiful hand! It is the character of heathens, Rom. i. 21. O let it not be that of Christians!

2. It is the way to get more. Unthankfulness mars the course of divine communications; but to the thankful it is opened, Phil. iv. 6. Ingratitude among men provokes the liberal person to withhold his hand; and so does it provoke the holy God, the giver of all good, to restrain his favours. Alas! it is more natural to us to ask than to give thanks, Among ten seekers (the lepers), whom Christ cured of a very inveterate disease, there was but one thanker; and he is specially noticed in the gospel-history. We should never beg a mercy from the Lord, without heartily thanking him for all we have formerly received, as this is the ready way to procure more.

*Thirdly*, How should we give thanks? With enlarged hearts, wondering at undeserved goodness; with deep humility for mercies conferred on such mean and unworthy creatures; with hearty resolutions to improve them for God's glory and honour; and with warm desires to receive more favours from the hands of God, our bountiful benefactor.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.



1. To live without prayer is a godless and graceless life, It is no better than the life of beasts, unsuitable to the rational nature of man, contrary to the design and end of his creation, and highly unbecoming one who is a candidate for immortality. It exposes the sinner to the severest strokes of God's justice; and, persisted in, will land him in hell. O let us all be excited to a life of prayer, remembering that we cannot be Christians without it. To pretend to be a Christian, and not to live a life of prayer, is a palpable contradiction.

2. The missing of the answers of prayer is our own fault, we pray amiss. If we always prayed in faith, and in the manner formerly observed, we would not be disappointed. Let us then be induced to pray in a right manner, and wait particularly on the Lord for gracious acceptance, and a favourable answer.

3. It is through Jesus Christ that the communication with heaven is opened and obtained. Let us then pray in his name, depend upon his intercession, and present all our petitions to God through him: for him the Father heareth always.

4. We need the Spirit of prayer, in order to our praying aright. Let us then cry incessantly for the Holy Spirit, and his influences; for we know not what to pray for as we ought. Let us look for his quickening influences to quicken our dead hearts, and warm our frozen affections, that we may send up our hearts unto God, and wing our desires to heaven.

5. Be exhorted to give yourselves unto prayer in all the sorts of it. Be men of prayer, as David was Psal. cxix. 164. 'Seven times a-day do I praise thee.' How may this shame many Christians who pray but twice a-day? And how does it condemn all who restrain prayer before the Lord? O let us be induced to make conscience of this important and delightful duty; without the exercise of which, we behave no better than the beasts that perish, and are a company of ungrateful monsters, that shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God, Pray evening and morning, and at all convenient seasons. Be always in a praying frame, and be devout and lively in all your applications to the throne of grace. Omit no season of it, not even amidst your daily employments; for even then ye

may send forth pious thoughts towards heaven, and maintain communion with God while you are engaged in your daily labours: 'Pray without ceasing.'

I might have spoke of occasional and stated prayer; of public, private, and secret prayer; and of ordinary and extraordinary; but I shall drop all these, and only give you next a discourse on secret prayer.



#### A DISCOURSE ON SECRET PRAYER.

MATTH. vi. 6.—*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*

**H**AVING opened unto you the nature of prayer in general, before I proceed to the explanation of the Lord's prayer, it will not be improper to discourse a little of that too much neglected duty, secret prayer; concerning which our blessed Lord gives directions in this passage of scripture. And this he does negatively, ver. 5. cautioning against performing that important duty with vanity and ostentation, to gain the applause of men. (2.) Positively, in the text. Wherein consider,

1. The duty itself urged by the Lord. And in it we may observe,

(1.) The duty supposed: *When thou prayest.* That this is to be understood only of secret prayer, is manifest from the text, and the preceding verse. Public prayer cannot be meant; for where else is that to be performed but in the congregation? Not family-prayer, which is not performed in a closet, and which must be done by more than one. Not ejaculatory prayer, which may be done any where, in any company, and whatever one be doing, as in the case of Nehemiah, chap. ii. 4. Therefore we must understand here solemn secret prayer; which, in the text, the Lord takes it for granted that his disciples made conscience of.

(2.) The place to be chosen for it: *Enter into thy closet;* that is, a secret place, where you may be out of the view

of others; for secret prayers are not to be restrained to secret chambers, as Christ's praying on a mountain does evidence.

(3.) The care that we should take least our secret place become public: *Shut thy door*, so as others may not see thee, and so thou fall a sacrifice to hypocrisy, vanity and ostentation.

(4.) The duty itself commanded: *Pray to thy father which is in secret*. Where we have, [1.] The object of prayer, *thy Father*, namely in Christ; intimating to us, that when we go to God, we should go to him as he is our Father in Christ, able and ready to help us, and reconciled to us in him. [2.] A designation which the Father gets, *which is in secret*; who knows as well what thou sayest in a secret place as what thou sayest in public; for he is omniscient and omnipresent.

2. The motive whereby he presseth secret prayer, viz. God's reward, who will openly reward service done in secret, which the world knows not of. And those who make conscience of this duty in faith and fervency, are no strangers to those rewards and advantages that are to be met with in this heavenly traffic.

The text affords the following doctrine.

DOCT. 'Secret prayer is a necessary duty incumbent on all.'

In discoursing from this subject, I shall,

- I. Confirm the doctrine.
- II. Shew the necessity of secret prayer.
- III. Answer some cases relating to this duty, in order to clear it further to you.
- IV. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to confirm the doctrine, or shew that secret prayer is a necessary duty incumbent on all. This will be clear, if ye consider,

1. Christ's express command in the text, which is to us instead of all reasons. His will is a sufficient ground of our duty. He commands nothing but what is just and right in itself, good for us, and conducive to his glory. And the command of God should be a prevalent motive



with all to practise constantly this duty, which is attended with so much pleasure and profit.

2. The Spirit of God, by the apostle, Eph. vi. 18. calls for it, 'Pray with all praying,' viz. all sorts of prayer, of which secret prayer is one. There are many exhortations to this duty in holy scripture, which manifestly shew the importance and necessity of it; such as that, 1 Thess. v. 17. 'Pray without ceasing;' which must denote secret prayer, as well as other kinds of that exercise.

3. The practice of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath set a fair and striking example of this duty to all his followers. He was in strict propriety a man of prayer, and spent much time in this delightful exercise; as we may see from Matth. xiv. 23. 'And when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.' Mark i. 35. 'And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.' Thus he retired from his public labours to converse in secret with his heavenly Father, and prevented the dawning of the day, to hold communion with heaven. Compare 1 John ii. 6. 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.' The neglect of secret prayer is an incontestable evidence of one's being a stranger to Christ,

4. The practice of the saints of God, who were all diligent in the performance of this excellent duty. Thus the Psalmist says, Psal. v. 3. 'My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.' And how often this holy man was employed in this exercise, he tells us, Psal. lv. 17. 'Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.' Which practice of his may make even the best of us blush, who usually confine our secret devotions to the morning and evening, and perhaps on very slight occasions intermit sometimes one of these seasons. But this pious man, though a crowned head, and involved in much business, was yet oftener at the throne of grace; for he says, Psal. cxix. 164. 'Seven times a-day I will praise thee.' O that we could imitate so noble an example of sequestration and retirement from the world! Thus also Daniel 'kneeled upon his knees three times a-day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God,' chap. vi. 10. and

that at a time when prayer to God was made a capital crime. Thus also we find, that Cornelius the Roman centurion, a proselyte to the Jewish religion, was one that ‘prayed to God always,’ Acts x. 2; and that it was secret, and not family-prayer, in which he was employed, when the angel appeared to him, is evident from ver. 7; for on the departure of the heavenly messenger from him, who certainly spoke to him in a retired chamber, he called some of his domestics, to dispatch them for Peter to come to him, as the angel had directed. Thus likewise we find, that good King Hezekiah was no stranger to this delightful exercise; for when the prophet Isaiah was sent with a heavy message to him, announcing his death, ‘he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord,’ Isa. xxxviii. 1, 2. Compare Cant. i. 7. And indeed to which of the saints can we turn in any age, who neglected this duty? Habitual neglect of prayer is not the spot of God’s children. No sooner does grace take possession of the soul of any person, but behold that person will pray, as Saul did at Damascus, after the extraordinary appearance of the Lord Jesus to him on his journey to that city, Acts ix. 11.

Thus we have express divine precepts, apostolical injunctions, and the approved practice of our Lord Jesus, and of all the saints, to recommend this duty to us; and wo unto us if we neglect it.

II. I proceed to shew the necessity of secret prayer. It is not necessary in regard of merit, as if we could procure heaven by it. The only ground of eternal life in the mansions of bliss is the righteousness of a crucified Redeemer. Beggars pay no debts, but confess insufficiency, saying with the prophet, Dan. ix. 5. ‘We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments.’ But it is necessary,

1. In regard of the command of God. He by a plain and express command requires it; and that command binds it as a necessary duty upon us. To neglect it, therefore, is a direct violation of the command of the great God and Law-giver; and to make conscience of it is a necessary and proper act of obedience to the divine will.

2. To give God the glory of his omniscience and omni-

presence. When we pray to *our Father which is in secret*, we plainly declare, that we believe he knows and sees all things, that the darkness and the light are alike unto him; and that he is the witness and inspector of all our actions, and will call us to an account for all our thoughts, words, and actions, which are well known to him.

3. To evidence our sincerity, that it is not to be seen of men that we pray; that we are not actuated from motives of ostentation and vain-glory, but from regard to the divine command, and a sincere desire to serve God; though indeed it will not hold that all such as pray in secret are sincere; for, alas! men may be very assiduous in this duty, and yet be far from being sincere Christians, or accepted of God therein.

4. In regard that none know our case so well as ourselves: and therefore, though the master of the family pray in the family, yet we ought to pray by ourselves, in order to make known our particular case and wants unto God, which none other can know, and to ask such blessings and mercies of him as we stand in need of, and are suitable to our circumstances.

5. In regard that, if we know our own hearts, we cannot but have somewhat to say unto the Lord, that we cannot, nor would it be at all proper to say before others, respecting both confession of sins and supplication for mercies. Hence the spouse says, Cant. vii. 11, 12. ‘Come, my Beloved, let us go forth unto the field: let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards, let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.’

6. In regard of our wants continually recurring on our hands, and daily and hourly temptations, that may call for this exercise, when family-prayer cannot be had. What man is so well supplied, both as to temporal and spiritual blessings, as to have no occasion for asking supplies from above? Man is a needy and indigent creature in all respects; as a creature he lives on the bounties of providence, and as a Christian on the grace which is in Christ Jesus; and therefore he must daily apply to the throne of grace for necessary supplies in both. And as we are daily surrounded with temptations, and have no strength to resist or repel them,



we must fetch in strength from God in Christ by prayer, lest we fall and be overcome by the temptations in our way.

Thus it appears from these considerations, that prayer is a necessary duty incumbent on all. And surely all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious will make conscience of this important and useful exercise.

III. I proceed to answer some cases concerning this duty, which will tend to clear it further unto you.

*Quest.* 1. What is the proper season of this duty of secret prayer? or when are we called to this exercise?

*Ans.* 1. We are doubtless to be very frequent in this duty. Thus we are called to 'pray always,' Eph. vi. 18. and 'without ceasing,' 1 Thess. v. 17. that is, at all proper times, and to be continually in a praying frame, or to pray inwardly, though we utter not a word with our lips.

2. Whenever God calls us to it, putting an opportunity in our hands, and moving and inciting us to it, then we are to go about it. Thus, when the Lord Jesus says, 'Seek ye my face;' our hearts should say unto him, 'Thy face, Lord, will we seek,' Psal. xxvii. 8. And thus we have daily calls and invitations to this duty, which we should carefully regard, and conscientiously embrace, lest we quench the Spirit, and provoke the Lord to harden our hearts from his fear.

3. The saints in scripture have sometimes been more, sometimes less frequent in this exercise. Thus David was sometimes employed thrice, sometimes seven times a-day in prayer, Psal. lv. 17. and cxix. 164. and Daniel three times, even at a very perilous juncture, Dan. vi. 10. From whose practice the frequency of performing this duty evidently appears.

4. Morning and evening at least we should pray, and not neglect this duty. This appears from our Lord's practice, Mark i. 35. Matth. xiv. 23. both cited above; from the practice of the saints in scripture, Psal. lv. 2. and v. 2. formerly quoted; and from the morning and evening sacrifice under the legal dispensation, which were daily offered, and should excite us to offer up unto God daily the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and praise. And the very light of nature teaches us so much; that when we are preserved through the silent watches of the dark night, and from the

perils we may be exposed unto in that gloomy season, we should acknowledge the goodness and kindness of God therein; and that when we are preserved through the day, from the many snares and temptations we are liable to amidst the cares and distractions of our business, we should bless God for his preserving and protecting mercy, and commit ourselves, and all our concerns, into the hand of God, when we are going to take necessary rest, that we may fall asleep under a sense of his love, and may rise again to resume the business of our callings with his blessing and favour.

*Quest. 2.* What is the proper place for secret prayer?

*Ans.* A secret place is the most proper place for this exercise; and though every body has not a closet, or retired apartment, into which he may go in and shut the door, yet any place where we may be retired from the view and observation of others, answers the purpose; though in other respects it be a public place, yet if it be dark, and the voice kept low, it is justly a secret place. And to a place of that sort did our Lord retire for secret prayer, Matth. xiv. 23, perhaps not having proper conveniency in the place where he lodged all night. And indeed there is not a person but may meet with such a secret place every day, if he have a disposition for this exercise.

*Quest. 3.* What gesture are we to use in secret prayer?

*Ans.* 1. Holy scripture does not bind us to any gesture particularly; but we find these four gestures of the body in prayer spoken of there, viz. standing, Mark xi. 25; lying along on the face, Matth. xxvi. 39; kneeling, Dan. vi. 10, Eph. iii. 14; and sitting, 2 Sam. vii. 18.

2. Whatever the gesture be, let it be a reverent one, that may express a humble and reverent frame of spirit. Hence we are commanded to ‘glorify God in our bodies,’ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

3. I shall say these two things for the further determination of this question. (1.) Let it be such a gesture as is conformable unto, or flows natively from, the present disposition of the heart. Thus in extraordinary cases we find the saints were wont to fall on their faces, 2 Sam. xii. 16. And so likewise did the Lord Jesus in the garden, on the eve of his sufferings, Matth. xxvi. 39. (2.) Yet let it be always to edification; and let that gesture be chosen which is most conducive to devotion, and occasions least distraction in the

duty: As if kneeling be dangerous for the body, and so may tend to disturb the mind, let another gesture be chosen that is not attended with these inconveniencies; though kneeling is certainly the most eligible gesture, and expressive of that humility which must ever accompany this exercise. And the same thing we may say of closing the eyes, or keeping them open; though praying with the eyes shut is certainly to be preferred.

*Quest. 4.* What are we to say of the voice in secret prayer?

*Ans. 1.* The duty may be performed without using the voice, as was done by Moses in the strait the children of Israel were reduced to, after their escape from Egypt, when high and inaccessible mountains were on each side of them, the Red Sea before them, and the Egyptian host at their heels ready to cut them off. In this dilemma we find that great man crying to the Lord, though not with an audible voice, *Exod. xiv. 15.* Thus the voice is not to be used when people cannot do so without being heard, or when through weakness of body, or disquiet of mind, they are unfit for speaking with the tongue.

2. Yet where the voice may be used, and that with convenience and propriety, it should be made use of; and that, (1.) Because we are to glorify God with our bodies; and particularly our tongue is given to be an instrument of glorifying God; ‘Awake, my glory,’ says David, *Psal. lviii. 8.* (2.) Because the voice is of good use in secret prayer, to stir up the affections, and to stay the mind from wandering. Yet an affected loudness of the voice, whereby the secret prayer is made public, is a sad sign of great hypocrisy, which every serious Christian will guard against.

*Quest. 5.* Is secret prayer a sure mark of sincerity? or can one pray in secret, and yet be an hypocrite?

*Ans.* This is not out of the reach of the hypocrite? A hypocrite may come this length, and much farther. Judas was among the rest whom our Lord taught to pray in secret, and ye all know what was his fate. But though a hypocrite may continue a long time, nay, many years, in the practice of secret prayer; yet it is scarcely to be thought that he will always do so, if he live a long life: For, says Job, ‘Will he [the hypocrite] always call upon God?’ *chap. xxviii. 10.* It is not to be thought that he will, as he has no communion with God in the duty. And therefore adds the same holy



man, ' Will he always delight himself in the Almighty ?' It is communion with God that is to be enjoyed in secret prayer, and the delight the soul has in it, that inclines a person to persevere in that exercise.

*Inst.* But if one pray not to be seen of men, can he be a hypocrite ?

*Ans.* Yes, he may. For the terrors of God scalding the conscience, and a desire to lay the ferment thereby brought into the mind, may excite one to the duty, and put the applause of men entirely out of the mind. But secret prayer, conscientiously practised, and attended with manifestations of the Lord's love and favour, smiles of his face returns of what was asked, and continued faith and fervency, are undoubted signs of sincerity.

I come now to the improvement of this subject.

USE I. Of information. It shews us,

1. That they have great reason to suspect themselves, who are strangers to this duty of secret prayer; and that on the following grounds.

(1.) Because they come not the length of many hypocrites, who shall never come the length of heaven. There are many such who will not, for any consideration, omit their secret prayers every day : which is a thing good in itself, but they make them the ground of their acceptance with God, and so will perish notwithstanding. How much more must those perish who live in the habitual neglect of this duty!

(2.) Because they look not like the saints, whose disposition has been to seek communion with God in secret, as in the case of the spouse, Cant. vii. 11. and many others. What can ye pretend to be saints, and yet live so very unlike them ?

(3.) Because it seems they are very unacquainted with themselves, that know nothing to confess to, or ask of God, but what they can do before any. Did men know their misery and their wants, and had a suitable sense thereof, they would not be strangers to secret prayer.

(4.) Because it looks too hypocritical-like to have others to be witnesses to all our duties.

2. Then there is much hidden work in religion. True religion is not all exposed to the view of others. Attending

on public ordinances in the church, and going the round of family-worship, is not that in which the whole of religion consists; for many may be diligent enough in these exercises, and yet strangers to vital heart-religion. But they that are truly religious in the eye of God, are such who not only perform outward duties, but worship God in spirit, and hold communion and intercourse with him in secret prayer, without which they can no more live, than without bread and water.

USE II. Of exhortation. Be exhorted then, all of you, to set about this duty of secret prayer. And this exhortation I address to you who never yet began this exercise, and to you who, though ye have perhaps formerly done something this way, yet now have left it off. To press this, I offer the following motives.

1. It is a piece of worship expressly commanded of God in the text, and it is directly required by him, Eph. vi. 18. Will ye then counteract God's express command? If ye do, it will be at your peril.

2. Are ye not engaged to this duty? Are not the vows of God upon you for the performance of it? Were ye not baptised in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to worship them, and that in all parts of worship, of which prayer is a principal one? Have not some of you been admitted to the Lord's table, when ye professed to renew your baptismal engagements? And perhaps some of you have sick-bed vows on you to that purpose.

3. Have ye not secret sins, secret wants, and secret temptations? and shall ye not have secret prayers adapted to each, requesting of the Lord the pardon of your secret sins, the supply of your secret wants, and grace to resist and overcome your secret temptations?

4. *Lastly*, This is your known duty; and therefore remember, that 'the servant that knew his master's will, but did it not, shall be beaten with double stripes.' Wherefore, I charge you, as you will answer to God at death and at judgment, and as you love your own souls, and would not eternally perish, to set about this necessary and important duty.

But some are ready to muster up a variety of objections against this duty; the chief of which I shall endeavour to obviate.

*Object.* 1. I have no time for secret prayer, for my work and business. *Ans.* 1. This is thy greatest work, even the salvation of thy soul, in comparison of which all thy other work is a mere trifle: and wilt thou take time for thy other work, and not for this work, that challenges thy utmost care and attention? 2. Fools haste is no speed. To rise out of the bed, and to go immediately to secular work, is foolish cursed haste. How canst thou look for a blessing on thy work without prayer? 3. Rise the sooner every morning, that you may not be scrimped as to time for this exercise, as our blessed Lord did, Mark i. 35. How wilt thou answer to God at the great day, for spending that time in sleep, which thou shouldst have spent in secret prayer? Daniel would not omit this exercise, though at the hazard of his life.

*Object.* 2. We are so wearied with our work through the day, that we are not able to pray in the evening. *Ans.* 1. What difference is there betwixt you and the beasts that take their ease when their work is done, without any more ado? 2. You will take your meat for your bodies, though ever so weary; and why will ye not think of and provide meat for your perishing souls? John iv. 6. 32. 3. Notwithstanding ye may be tired, do what ye are able. We are not commanded to tell you to make your prayers short or long; but by no means to neglect secret prayer altogether, which is very dangerous. But I suppose, that when you say your body is not able to subsist with secret prayer, that yet if ye could gain a sixpence at that very time, you would spend twice much more time for that paltry gain; and yet slight the concerns of your souls, under this frivolous pretence.

*Object.* 3. We have no convenient place for secret prayer. *Ans.* Find out once a willing heart for this exercise, and I shall engage you for it you shall find a place. Are there not barnes, byres, out-houses, and fields, for you to retire to? Will not these rise up and witness against thee that neglectest this duty, at the great day? For my part, I would rather go to prayer, even within a dwelling-house, in the place where the beasts stand, or behind a bed, or at the back of a house, ere I should neglect it. God requires all men to pray, but he does not require all men to have chambers and closets.

*Object.* 4. But there are prayers in our family, and I join therein; what needs more! *Ans.* Poor soul! hast thou no



more to say of thyself to God, but what the master of the family says? Alas! thou knowest not thyself, and the dreadful case thou art in by nature; which if thou didst, thou wouldst not think joining in prayer with others enough. Thou thinkest it sufficient that the master of the family pray for thee, and the other members of his family, and thou liest by without concerning thyself about duty for thyself; wilt thou think it enough, that he go to heaven for thee, and thou be shut out for ever?

*Object. 5.* But (says the master of the family) I pray with my family, and I hope that is enough for me. *Ans.* In this command in the text, Christ has not excepted thee, neither dare I. Again, dost thou so well discharge family prayer, that thou hast no escapes or failures to be matter of secret prayer? I tell you plainly, that God will not have his worship halved: He will have either the whole or nothing. Being conscientious in family-prayer is good, but can never excuse the neglect of secret prayer, which is as much thy duty. Yea, the more thou art helped to discharge family-duty, the more wilt thou be inclined to the practice of secret duty. The false mother was for dividing the child, not the true one.

*Object. 6.* Some women that have children to nurse and wait on, think that frees them from this duty. *Ans.* It is a sad observation of many women, who, while they are unmarried, and are not involved in the cares and troubles of a family, have some profession and practice of religion; but as soon as they get a house to manage, and have the care of young children especially, they cast off all religion, as if they had no more concern therein. But surely the very sight of the child whom thou hast conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, should remind thee of thy original guilt and corruption, and incite thee to apply to the blood and Spirit of Christ for pardon and cleansing, and be a powerful spur to thee to set about this great duty of secret prayer. And remember, that the welfare of thy own soul, and that of the child, is more than that of the child's bodily welfare, which deserves but the second care in comparison of the other. I would not have you by any means to cast off the care of the young one's temporal welfare; but thou mayst so observe times and seasons, as thou mayst take time for this duty morning and evening, though it be not immediately after

thou risest, or before thou liest down. Thou mayst even do it when thou art rocking the cradle, or suckling the child. Alas! it had been telling many, that they had had the womb that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck.

*Object.* 7. God knows the heart, and what needs so much ado about praying in secret, as if God knew not what we wanted, or what we would be at, till we sit down on our knees, and tell him? *Ans.* God knows the heart of such an objector to be a graceless heart, and his end to be destruction, Matth. vii. 15. 20; and his heart to be a foolish atheistical heart, that will not call upon God, Psal. xiv. 1. Again, what is this but to argue God's command to be foolish? He bids you pray, and you say it is needless. O daring presumption! Though the Lord not only knows your heart, but has a mind to give blessings to poor sinners, he will have you seek them by prayer: 'For these things,' says he, 'will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, that I may do it for them,' Ezek. xxxvi. 37. God never confers signal mercies on his people, without first pouring out on them the Spirit of faith and prayer, and determines them to seek ardently the very thing he has a mind to grant them. And this method is for the glory of his name, and for our real benefit.

*Object.* 8. Age and infirmity will not suffer me to go about that duty. *Ans.* Will it suffer you to do your business in the world, and will it not suffer you to manage your soul's business, which is of infinitely greater importance? It would seem, that the nearer we draw to the grave, the more active we should be in preparing for it. It were good, that old people would mind heaven more, and the world less, as they have so short a time to stay here. The concerns of the other world should mainly ingross their care and attention, and they should then redouble their diligence in improving their span of time, and doing that which perhaps they too much neglected in the days of health and vigour. 'The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness,' Prov. xvi. 31; 'But the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed,' Isa. lxv. 20. Let this sound an alarm to all the old sinners among you, that ye may yet apply to the merciful Redeemer, who sets even some to work in the vineyard at the eleventh hour. It is sad to be tottering under the miseries and infirmities of old age, and yet to

have no prospect of a happy landing. Fly then to Christ, thou old decrepit sinner, while his call reaches thee, lest thou speedily perish without remedy.

*Object. 9.* I am too young to mind secret prayer. *Ans.* You are too old never to have entered on God's service. Remember that Josiah, when he was but eight years old, began to seek the Lord God of his father David. Obadiah, Ahab's steward, feared the Lord greatly from his youth. John Baptist was sanctified from the womb; and so was the prophet Jeremiah. Timothy knew the holy scriptures from a child. You can never begin to be religious too soon. None ever repented that they sought the Lord; but all have repented that they did not begin to seek him sooner. You are as liable to death as the oldest person here, have a soul as precious as theirs, and as much need to mind your best and eternal interests as they. Up then and be doing, without putting off a moment longer.

*Object. ult.* I cannot pray. *Ans.* The truth is thou wilt not pray, Psal. x. 4. If thou hadst a will to the duty, thou wouldst soon learn. But if thou wouldst learn to pray, go to God that he may teach thee, as Christ taught the disciples; and consider the absolute need thou hast of divine instruction in this matter. Use the one talent, and God will increase it. Wherefore set about this weighty duty, and neglect it not. Think seriously with yourselves, whether those who are now in hell, and when they lived neglected secret prayer like you, would do so still if they were in the world again. I scarce think they would. Pray now, therefore, lest ye repent your neglect, when it will be too late, and ye are tormented in the lake of fire and brimstone. Again, think with yourselves how you will get this criminal neglect digested on a death-bed, when ye are ready to leap into eternity, without having once prayed for God's mercy through Christ to your souls; and how you will get it digested before the awful tribunal of God, when he will drive you from his blessed presence for ever. Think with yourselves how precious time is, and what a sad business it is to spend it in pursuing the world and lying vanities, and neglecting communion with God, wherein lies the life of the soul. What! will ye delay it yet a while? O do it not! for delays are dangerous. Will ye be so foolish as to venture all to two or three words on a sick-bed or death-bed? Perhaps you



will not get one, but may be hurried away in a moment. Consider that awful passage, Prov. i. 24 — 28. ‘ Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.’

*Exhort. 2.* Be frequent in this duty, morning and evening at least, and at other times when your conveniency will allow, and go not only to it now and then. Consider,

1. God’s express command, which ties you to *pray always continually*, and *without ceasing*. This does not mean, that you should do nothing but pray, or spend your whole time in this exercise. No ; but denotes frequency, and embracing every opportunity that offers for so delightful and profitable a duty. It says you should be always in a praying frame, never having your minds so much ingrossed in worldly concerns, as to be indisposed to call upon God in prayer.

2. Frequency in this duty is a good sign of a good frame and an excellent mean to maintain and preserve it. They who are not frequent in this exercise, do thereby shew that their frame and disposition is not spiritual, but carnal, much under the conduct of sense, and attachment to sensible things. Whereas, if a person were frequent in this duty, it would be a token of a heart weaned from the world, and much conversant in the things of God.

3. *Lastly*, It is dangerous to grow slack and remiss in this duty, as mournful experience has testified in the case of many. They who having been for years frequently employed in this heavenly exercise do at last turn careless, restrain prayer before the Lord, or but now and then bow a knee before him, do thereby declare they have lost the life and relish of the power of religion, and are in the high road to apostasy. There are not wanting instances of such having returned with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Others have been made signal monuments of judgment, and set up as beacons to backsliders. And some who have had the root of the matter in them, have had such a storm raised in their consciences, as has made

them a terror to themselves, and all around them; and it has cost them much and sore wrestling with God ere they recovered the light of his countenance. For the Lord's sake, then, and your own soul's sake, be frequent in this exercise, and grow not remiss therein, lest ye feel the vengeance of God's temple.

*Exhort. 3.* To parents and masters of families. I beseech and intreat you, by the mercies of God, by the love ye bear to the Lord Jesus, and the regard ye have to the souls of your children and servants, not only to pray in secret yourselves, but by all the means that are competent to you, by command, advice, exhortation, &c. to stir them up to this duty of secret prayer. For motives consider,

1. It was the practice of John the Baptist, yea, and of Christ himself, the great Prophet of the church, Luke xi.

1. Thus this duty comes recommended by the best authority, and the most excellent approved patterns. Christ taught and urged his disciples to pray, and for that end gave them an excellent directory, suited to their then state; and which ye would do well to make your rule in instructing your children and servants.

2. God expressly commands it, Deut. vi. 7. 'Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' Thus they were to be daily employed in this duty, not only to let their children know what they were bound to do, but to press them to the performance of it. And this command being of moral obligation, is equally incumbent upon you that are Christian parents and masters of families; and ye have far superior advantages for this exercise than the Israelites had, a small part of the Bible having been then written; whereas ye have the whole of it among your hands.

3. God commends the practice in Abraham, Gen. xviii.

19. 'I know him,' says Jehovah, 'that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.' Thus, if thou make conscience of this duty, thou wilt tread in the steps of the father of the faithful, and receive tokens of the divine approbation, by the Lord's blessing thy family, and prospering thy outward concerns, and be an example to others to excite them to their duty. This will be the ready way to

have dutiful and affectionate children, and obedient and careful servants.

4. Consider the engagements which thou tookest on thee at the baptism of thy children, to train them up in the good and holy ways of the Lord; to inform them of their natural depravity, impotency, and aversion to what is good, of the method of salvation by the obedience and death of Christ; and to press them to yield themselves to the Lord, by taking hold of his covenant by faith. Thou became then engaged to instruct them in the principles of our holy religion, to shew them their duty to God and man, and to observe his ordinances and commandments. And canst thou fulfil these thy engagements, unless thou be at pains to instruct them, and especially to stir them up to the practice of secret prayer.

5. *Lastly*, Their souls are committed to thy charge; and if they perish through thy neglect, their blood will be required at thy hand. Ah! my friends, Papists and others will rise up in judgment against you, who take more pains on their children, to breed them up in their false and corrupt doctrines, and their idolatrous and superstitious courses, than ye to instruct them in the pure doctrines and precepts of religion. If thou now neglect their religious education and instruction, thy lost children and servants shall curse the day that ever they saw thy face, who tookest no more care of them than of thy beasts. Oh! let this melancholy consideration excite and stir thee up to thy duty now, lest thy children and servants rise up in judgment against thee, and be a dreadful addition to thy condemnation.

What shall we do then? may ye say.

1: As soon as they can speak perfectly, give them a few words to speak to God upon their knees every morning and evening, and see that they do so. Let these words consist of a short confession of sin, an acknowledgment of God's goodness in preservation, and an application for pardon through the blood of Jesus.

2. When they advance farther in years, give them the help of a form, composed chiefly in scripture-words, and particularly that which Christ taught his disciples. And be sure to vary and enlarge any form you give them, from time to time; and in a little time, by reading the Bible, and duly considering their own case and wants, they will be able to pray without a set form; for it is often observed, that where



young ones make conscience of practising the helps that are given them, and take pleasure in the duty, the Holy Spirit strikes in with his assistance, and lays suitable matter of prayer before them ; so that even some very young persons have been found to pray with great fluency and fervour, to the admiration of those who happened to overhear them.

3. Pray frequently with your children ; which will be an excellent means to instruct them both as to the matter and manner of the duty, and have a powerful influence upon them to induce them to pray for themselves. And indeed I must say, if parents made more conscience of this practice, in praying with their children, the young ones would not discover such aversion to the duty as many do ; nor would there be such a numerous fry of young prayerless sinners among us, who, though they have not learned to pray, yet are great proficients in speaking vain and idle words, and in cursing and swearing.

4. Furnish them daily with proper materials of prayer, which ye can extract from the Lord's word, your own observation of the state and temper of your souls, the disposition and inclination of your children, the sins and vanities they are most addicted to, your knowledge of their peculiar wants and desires, and what appears to be suitable to their circumstances and situation.

5. *Lastly*, Carefully observe, whether they perform this duty or not ; that you may encourage them when they do well, and check and rebuke them when they neglect it. Shew them that you are influenced by a regard to the command and authority of God, and are actuated with a hearty zeal and concern for the salvation of their souls, in all you do in this matter, whether respecting the encouragements and advices you give them, or the rebukes and chastisements you administer to them, in case of non-compliance, neglect, or careless performance, of the duty enjoined. This will have no small influence upon them to comply with your instructions and directions, and by degrees conquer their aversion to the exercise ; and you may come, through the divine blessing, to see the happy fruit of your labours and endeavours.

Thus I have endeavoured, as briefly as I could, to lay before you the nature, importance, and necessity, of this excellent duty of secret prayer, and have removed the most mate-

rial objections that can be made against it. If any of you, then, shall continue in the habitual neglect of this exercise, and so perish, your blood will be upon your own head, for I have delivered my own soul. But I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak: and I hope there will no more henceforth be a prayerless person among us. Which God, of his infinite mercy, grant.



OF THE RULE OF DIRECTION IN PRAYER.

MATTH. vi. 9.—*After this manner, therefore, pray ye,  
Our Father, &c.*

OUR Lord Jesus Christ, in his sermon on the mount, whereof this chapter is a part, retrieves religion from the false doctrines, and the corrupt and hypocritical practices, which the Scribes and Pharisees brought into it. They were not wanting in the matter of external duties, but they were far from the right manner of performing them. Wherefore, in the first four verses, he teaches them the right manner of doing alms. In the next place, he teaches them the right manner of praying. He taxes two faults in the manner of praying: (1.) Hypocritical ostentation, ver. 5. and points them to the right manner in this point. (2.) Idle multiplying of words, ver. 7, 8. In the text, for helping of this fault, and others about prayer, the Lord, being to give us a prayer to serve for a pattern, and to direct us in praying, bids us ‘pray after this manner;’ *i. e.* in the manner following in the form of prayer here set down; not binding us to the very words, but to the manner of it, that we must pray after this manner, and to this purpose.

The right manner of performing the duty of prayer, is what God requires, and we should be concerned for. The Lord knows his people’s weakness, and how ready they are to go wrong in this, and how much they need direction; and therefore gives this form and pattern of prayer, for their direction in that weighty duty: After this manner address yourselves to God in prayer. He had not left them, with-

out direction altogether before: they had the word formerly written, but this is added as a special rule of direction.

The text offers this doctrine:

DOCT. ' Though the whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer, yet the special rule of direction is that form of prayer, which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called *the Lord's prayer*.'

Here I shall shew,

- I. That we need direction in prayer.
- II. What rule God hath given for our direction therein.
- III. Whether these rules are sufficient to enable us to pray acceptably.
- IV. Deduce some inferences.

I. I am to shew, that we need direction in prayer. This is evident from,

1. God's greatness. It is to him who dwells in heaven that we must address ourselves in prayer: therefore, ' be not rash with thy mouth (says Solomon), nor let thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few,' Eccl. v. 2. Rash and fearless approaches speak unbecoming thoughts of God, and low thoughts of the throne in heaven, which one presents himself before. And to such may be said, ' These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes,' Psal. l. 21. Who of us, approaching the presence of our prince, to present our petition before him, would not seek direction as to the right and acceptable manner of doing it? How much more should we, who have petitions to present to him who is God of gods, and King of kings, ask direction as to the right manner of presenting our petitions?

2. Our own guiltiness, Luke xviii. 13. Whoever would be rash or careless in approaching his prince's presence, one would think that a rebel, a traitor, and a criminal, would see well to the manner of his address, and would be very cautious. This is our case, and therefore that should be our way. Therefore the prodigal thinks before-hand what he will say to his offended father, Luke xv. 18, 19.



3. The weight of the matter we go upon. Our errand to the throne is, to worship God, who 'will be sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people will he be glorified,' Lev. x. 3. which is awful and solemn work, and gives ground for that question, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God,' Micah vi. 6. It is to present our supplications for our needs for time and for eternity. And if he help us not, all the world cannot do it. Our souls lie at stake, eternity is before us; and to treat with God on the business of eternity, is business that needs direction.

4. Our weakness and aptness to mistake and miscarry in the approach, Job xxxvii. 19. 'Teach us what we shall pray unto him: for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.' We have no skill to manage the weighty matter; and we will be persuaded of it, if we know ourselves. We are ready to go wrong in the matter of prayer, Rom. viii. 26. to ask of God things not agreeable to his revealed will, being blinded with our own passions and prejudices, Luke ix. 54. And we are apt to go wrong in the manner of prayer, by insincerity, formality, and carnality, Jam. iv. 3. Isa. lxiv. 7.

5. *Lastly*, The danger of mistaking and miscarrying in prayer, either of the ways. It may provoke the Lord against us, and bring down a curse instead of a blessing upon us, Mal. i. ult. 'Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen,' Exod. xx. 7. 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.' At least it will frustrate our prayers, so that they will be rejected and not heard, Jam. iv. 3. our petitions cast over the bar. Or what we seek not agreeable to his will, may be given us with a vengeance, Psal. cvi. 15.

II. The second head is, What rule hath God given for our direction in prayer? Our gracious God has not left us without direction in that matter. We have from himself the rule which we are to walk by in our addresses to the throne: and how else could we know it? who else could teach us

how guilty creatures should present their supplications to the most high God? And,

*First*, There is a general rule given us for that end; and that is the whole word of God, the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, in which God's will is revealed, as to all things to be believed or done by us, 1 John v. 14. By our Bible we may learn to pray; for there we are furnished with all sorts of helps and directions for this duty, as to matter, manner, and words; and therefore it is a complete directory for prayer.

1. It furnishes us abundantly with matter of prayer, in all the parts of it, petition, confession, &c. Psal. li. 4, 5. Phil. iv. 6. And whoso has the word of God dwelling richly in him, will not want of matter for prayer, for himself or for others. There is a storehouse of it there, of great variety; and we are welcome to the use of it, agreeable to our own case.

2. It fully directs us as to the manner of prayer: as, for instance, that we must pray with sincerity, Heb. x. 22. with humility, Psal. x. 17. in faith, Jam. i. 6. and with fervency, Jam. v. 16. And there is no qualification necessary in prayer, but what we may learn from the holy word.

3. It furnishes us with the most fit words to be used in prayer. Do ye want words to express your desires before the Lord? He has given us his own words in the Bible, that we may use them according to our needs, Hos. xiv. 2.

*Secondly*, There is a special rule given us by Jesus Christ for that end, namely, that form of words which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called 'the Lord's prayer;' that excellent pattern and example of prayer, composed by Jesus Christ himself for our direction in the text, which every Christian is obliged to receive with the utmost reverence, as the Lord's own word. But it was never imposed by Jesus Christ, or his apostles, as a set form to which his church is bound to pray in *these very words*, and no other. It is true, in the year 618, the Council of Toledo imposed it on the clergy, under the pain of deposition; but then Antichrist had mounted the throne, and the Papists since have superstitiously abused it to this day. I would all Protestants could plead, Not guilty. To clear this matter,

1. The Lord's prayer is given us as a directory for prayer, a pattern and an example, by which we are to regulate our

petitions, and make other prayers by. This is clear from the text, *After this manner pray ye, &c.* And it is a most ample directory in few words, to be eyed by all praying persons, if studied and understood. There we are taught to pray in a known tongue, and without vain repetitions, to God only, and for things allowed; to have chief respect to the glory of God and our own advantage.

2. It may also be used as a prayer, so that it be done with understanding, faith, reverence, and other praying graces. So we own the very words may lawfully be used, Matth. vi. 9. compared with Luke xi. 2. See Larger Catechism, quest. 187. and the Directory for Public Worship, under the title, *Of prayer after Sermon*, parag. 5. Who can refuse this, since it is a piece of holy scripture, of the Lord's own word? And they who are so weak, as that they cannot conceive prayer, do well to use this holy form; though they should endeavour to make further progress in prayer. And sometimes knowing Christians, under great desertions, not able to conceive prayer, have used it with good success. But,

3. Our Lord hath not tied us to this very form of words when we pray to God. This is evident,

(1.) Because the prayers afterwards recorded in the scripture, were neither this form of words, nor yet concluded with it. Christ himself used it not in his prayer at Lazarus's grave, John xi. 41; nor in his last prayer, John xvii. Nor did his apostles, Acts i. 24; nor the church, Acts iv. 24. &c.

(2.) This prayer is diversely set down by Matthew and Luke, the only two evangelists that make mention of it. And though it is obvious, that there is an entire harmony between them, as to the matter and sense of the words; yet it is equally obvious, to all who compare them together, that there is some difference as to mode or manner of expression, particularly as to the fourth and fifth petitions; which certainly there would not have been, had it been designed for a form of prayer. In Luke, the fourth petition runs thus, 'Give us day by day our daily bread;' but in Matthew, it is thus expressed, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' The latter contains a petition for the supply of present wants; and the former for the supply of wants as they daily recur upon us: so that both accounts being compared together, we are directed to pray for those temporal blessings which we want



at present, and for a supply of those we stand in need of as they daily recur: which shews a considerable difference in the expressions. In Luke, the fifth petition is, 'Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us;' whereas, in Matthew the expression is very different, viz. 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.' Again, Luke leaves out the doxology, 'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen;' which Matthew adds. From whence it may be justly inferred, that our Lord's design in furnishing his disciples with this prayer, was not that they should confine themselves solely to the manner of expression used therein, without the least variation; for then undoubtedly the two evangelists would have recorded it in the very same words; but he rather intended it as a directory respecting the matter of prayer. So that it is impossible to keep by the form of words precisely, since it is not one. It is said, Luke xi. 2. 'When ye pray say, &c. Here we are tied to the form of words, say our adversaries. *Ans.* By this phrase is to be understood the manner, viz. Say this on the matter, pray after this manner. Compare Matth. vi. 9. If it is to be understood otherwise, then, (1.) According to Matth. x. 7. 'Go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand;' the disciples preaching was confined to these very words, which we are sure it was not. (2.) It would be unlawful to pray in any other words, which no Christian dare assert. (3.) Neither Papists nor Episcopalians stick to these words in Luke, but use the words in Matthew; by which they give up the cause.

Further, it may be observed, that our Saviour chiefly intended this prayer as a directory, respecting the matter of our petitions, rather than a form; because it does not explicitly contain all the parts of prayer, particularly confession of sin, and thankful acknowledgement of mercies. Again, there is no explicit or direct mention of the Mediator, in whose name we are to pray; nor of his obedience, sufferings, and intercession, on which the efficacy of our prayers is founded, and their success depends: which things are to be supplied from other parts of scripture; all which, taken together, give us a complete directory for prayer.

From the whole, I think it is evident, that a prayer formed upon the model of this excellent pattern, having the substance of the several petitions interspersed through it, though

expressed in other words, is a true scriptural prayer; and that there is no necessity to conclude with the Lord's prayer. And therefore, I cannot but think, that Papists, and many Protestants, who conclude their prayers with the very words of the Lord's prayer, make a very superstitious use of it; causing people imagine, that the bare recital of the words of the Lord's prayer sanctifies their other prayers; and that no prayer can be accepted of God where this, I cannot but call it vain; repetition is omitted.

III. Whether are these rules sufficient to enable us to pray acceptably? *Ans.* They are sufficient in their kind. i. e. as external directions and helps. But besides, the inward grace and assistance of the Spirit are necessary for that end, Rom. viii. 26\*.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

*Inf.* 1. How gracious and ready to hear prayer is our God, who has been pleased himself to direct us how to pray to him! We ought to be duly thankful to him for his great goodness in this matter, and diligently attend to the excellent rules he has given us on this head.

2. Let us acquaint ourselves with the blessed word, that contains such a full rule of practice as well as faith; and study the holy scriptures, that we may be the better instructed to pray. The bible is a noble guide for prayer, both for the matter and manner thereof; and if we diligently study it, we will not be in hazard of uttering any thing contrary to or inconsistent with it, or of using the words he has given us without knowledge or understanding.

3. Those who neglect prayer on any pretence, and particularly on that pretence that they cannot pray, or those who stick by a mere form, without endeavouring to improve in the duty, are highly culpable and inexcusable, as they have so many and such excellent helps scattered throughout the whole word of God. Herein they sin against God, and wrong their own souls.

*Lastly,* See the absolute necessity of prayer in the Christian life. Be convinced, that ye cannot be without that which

\* The author afterwards preached a course of excellent sermons on this subject, from the text here quoted, which since have been published, and forms a very proper appendix to this and the subsequent discourses.

the Lord is at so much pains to bring you to, by not only teaching you what to pray, but promising his Holy Spirit to assist you therein. Apply yourselves diligently to this duty, that you may be often with God, guiding yourselves therein by the direction of the word; and plead importunately for the quickening power and influence of the Holy Spirit, for his help and assistance. He will shew thee thy wants, to give thee matter of petition; thy sins, to give thee matter of confession; the mercies and blessings of God, to yield thee matter of thanksgiving; and the church's miseries and necessities, to furnish thee with matter of intercession.

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THE PREFACE OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

MATTH. vi. 9.—*Our Father which art in heaven.*

**T**HE Lord's prayer consists of three parts, the preface, petitions, and conclusion. The preface is in the words which I have read, designing the object of worship, and particularly of prayer, namely, God himself. And we are directed to address ourselves in prayer to him, (1.) As a *Father*; (2.) As *our Father*; and (3.) As *our Father in heaven*.

The words afford this doctrine.

DOCT. 'If we would pray acceptably, we must address ourselves to the Lord in prayer, as our *Father* which is in heaven.'

Here I shall shew,

- I. What our being directed to call God *Father* in prayer doth teach us.
- II. What our being directed to call God *our Father* teaches us.
- III. What we are taught by our being directed to address ourselves to God as *our Father in heaven*.
- IV. Deduce some inferences.



I. I am to shew, what our being directed to call God *Father* in prayer does teach us. It teaches,

1. The children of God to be those who only can or are capable to pray acceptably: for they only can indeed call God *Father*. We cannot pray acceptably unless he be our Father, and we his children, namely, by regeneration and adoption, John ix. 31. How can one plead the privileges of the family, if he be none of the members thereof, but of his father the devil, a stranger to the covenant of promise? Therefore, if we would pray aright, our state must first be changed, Jam. v. 16.

*Quest.* May none pray, then, who cannot call God, *Father*? *Ans.* There are two sorts of these.

(1.) Unregenerate persons, who are yet in the state of black nature, who have no ground to plead this saving relation to God. They may, yea, ought to pray, though they cannot pray acceptably; because prayer is the natural duty of all, which all are bound to, and the neglect of which God will punish them for, Jer. x. ult. And prayer is not a sin, but a duty, though, as it is by them managed, it is turned into sin, as all other duties are. But the neglect of it is a greater sin.

*Object.* But it is needless for them to pray, since they cannot pray acceptably. *Ans.* No: for it is a mean of grace, and an ordinance of God; and though God have no respect to it as it is their performance, yet he may have respect to it as it is his own ordinance, and do good to them by it. The matter lies here; they are neither to continue in their sinful state, nor to satisfy themselves with their praying in that condition, but come out of it, and join themselves to God's family, and so they will come to pray acceptably.

(2.) The children of God who cannot discern their relation to him. These not only may pray, but pray acceptably, Psal. ciii. 13. 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.' But it is their duty to endeavour to assure their hearts before him, to advance their hunger and thirst after him to an actual acceptance of God to be their Father in Christ, and thereupon to believe he is their Father.

2. That it is through Jesus Christ we have access to God in prayer, Eph. ii. 18, because it is through him alone that God becomes our Father; by him, for his sake, we are adopt-

ed into the family of heaven, John i. 12. When we hear that a company of guilty creatures, who stood before God as their terrible Judge, trembling for fear of his sentence of condemnation, change their note, and call him by the kindly name of *Father*, and confidently apply to him as children, we must own this to be owing to the mediation, obedience, and death of his Son, John xx. 17. And therefore,

3. That coming to God in prayer, we must come in the name of his Son, as the alone foundation of all our confidence in and expectation from God, John xiv. 13. Being married to the Son, we call God *Father*, and make bold in his house, by virtue of our relation to him, through our Lord and Husband. And on the continuance of this relation to Christ depends the continuance of this relation to his Father; and blessed be our immortal Husband, that the marriage with him can never be dissolved.

4. That the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of Christ in his people, is the principle of all acceptable praying to God; for by him it is that we are enabled to call God *Father*, Gal. iv. 6. and therefore it is called 'inwrought prayer,' Jam. v. 16. He it is who excites his people to pray, moves them to go to God with their whole case, Psal. xxvii. 8. He furnishes them with acceptable matter of prayer, Rom. viii. 26. and with praying graces and affections, ib. And without the Spirit dwelling and acting in us, we cannot pray acceptably; and the more we have of the Spirit, we will pray the better.

5. That we should draw near to God in prayer with child-like dispositions and affections towards him.

(1.) Though he be very kind, and admit us into familiarity with him, yet we must come with a holy reverence, Mal. i. 6. 'If I be a Father, where is mine honour?' Familiarity must not breed contempt. The character of a Father bears not only kindness, but reverence and fear in it. It is a mixture of love and awful authority; and the ingenious child will regard both. Slavish fear is to be laid aside, but child-like reverence is necessary, Heb. xii. 18.

(2.) Though we have offended God, and be under the marks of his displeasure, we must come with confidence, whatever we want, whatever we need, Eph. iii. 12. While he bids us call him *Father*, he requires of us confidence in him for the supply of all our wants. For fatherly affection is tender; the child's trouble touches the father nearly, and

his interest is the father's interest, which is ground of confidence, Psal. ciii. 13. forecited, Isa. lxiii. 9. 'Surely they are my children,' Zech. ii. 8. 'He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.'

(3.) That God is ready and willing to help us, and we should come to him in that confidence, Matth. vii. 11. 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?' We should pour out our hearts into his bosom, in full confidence of his pity. Whom can a child expect help of, if not of a father? But no father has the bowels of compassion that God has towards his own. If the mother's tenderness towards the child be ordinarily greater than that of the father's, yet the Lord is still more, Isa. xlix. 15, 16. 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me.' And there is no such present help as he is.

*Object.* But is not the heavenly Father often far from helping his children? *Ans.* The children of God often think so, when their trouble is continued, and the deliverance comes not quickly. But he is their Father: therefore, (1.) He designs their good by all the hardships they meet with, Rom. viii. 28. 'All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.' (2.) He pities them under their hardships. (3.) He is a God of judgment, knows best when to remove them, and will do it in due time. The child cries, 'Father, remove this affliction, or this trial, for it pains me.' The Father pities, but his judgment leaves it till it be good for the child that it be removed.

II. I proceed to shew, what our being directed to call God *our Father* teaches us.

Negatively, Not that we may not pray, saying, *My Father*, or that we are always to speak plurally, saying, *We pray*. For we have scripture-examples for praying in the singular number, Ezra. ix. 6. Luke xv. 18, 19. But,

1. That we are not only to pray secretly by ourselves alone, but with others, joining with them in public and private.



And hence may be brought no inconsiderable argument for that too much neglected duty of family-prayer; which the guilty would do well seriously to consider.

2. That we are to pray, not only for ourselves, but for others also, according to scripture-example and precept, Acts xii. 5. 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

Praying with and for others is a piece of the communion of saints. And it is one of the privileges of God's family on earth, that they have the prayers of all the family there. God is a rich Father, who has blessings for all.

III. I come now to shew, what we are taught by our being directed to address ourselves to God as *our Father in heaven*.

1. That we are to eye his sovereign power and dominion over all, in our addresses to him, believing that he is able to help us in our greatest straits, that nothing is too hard for him but he can do whatsoever he will, Psal. cxv. 3. This is a noble ground for faith. Our Fathers on earth may be unable to help; but our Father in heaven is almighty, and has power to help in every case.

2. That we should be filled with heavenly affections in prayer, Psal. cxxiii. 1. and that God's glorious greatness above us should strike an awe upon us in our approaches to him, Eccl. v. 2.

3. God's glorious and wonderful condescension, who vouchsafes to look from his throne in heaven unto us poor worms on earth, Isa. lxvi. 1, 2.

4. *Lastly*, That we go to God as those who are strangers on this earth, and to whom heaven is home, because it is our Father's house, 1 Pet. i. 17. looking on this world as the place of our pilgrimage, and the men and manners of it as those we desire to leave, that we may be admitted into the society of angels, and consort with the spirits of just men made perfect.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

*Inf.* 1. Let us see here the miserable condition of those who have no ground to call God Father. They were never adopted into the family of heaven, but are of their father the devil, still members of the family of hell; and if they be not delivered from that hellish society, they must perish

for ever. They have never yet prayed aright; for none can pray in a proper manner but those who have the Spirit of adoption. O cry to God, that he may be graciously pleased to translate you from the family of Satan into the family of God, and invest you with the privileges of the children of his family.

2. There is no right praying without faith. For without faith it is impossible to please God; and whatever is not of faith is sin. We cannot call God *Father*, nor love or reverence him without faith: nor can we have any fellowship or communion with him, but by faith in him as our father in Christ.

3. Hence see the happiness of the saints in the love of the Father, who is their Father; of the Son, who has made them the children of God: and of the Holy Spirit, who teaches them to call God their Father. How happy must those be who are so nearly related to all the three persons of the adorable Trinity, and are loved by, and have communion with each of them! O seek above all things to become the children of God, and ye shall be thus happy!

4. There is no case a child of God is much to mean in, in the world, as long as he has a Father in heaven, to whom he can have access by prayer, at all times and in all cases, whether it be in life or in death, Micah vii. 7. The believer's Father is a very present help in trouble; and when all help fails, he will never fail his own children; but will sanctify their troubles, be present with them in their greatest straits and afflictions, support them under them, and deliver them, as he sees it will be for his own glory, and their good. O! then, let us plead our interest in him as our Father, and engage his Spirit and presence to be ever with us, in every circumstance of life, and in the awful scenes of death and the grave, which we should view, not with terror, but with joy, as the messenger sent to convey us to the house of our Father which is in heaven.

## THE FIRST PETITION.

MATTH. vi. 9.—*Hallowed be thy name.*

**I**N the Lord's prayer are six petitions, whereof three are for God's honour, and other three for our own good. Those which concern the honour of God take the lead of what concerns our good; for it is highly reasonable that the creature's interest vail to God's interest. The first of these petitions relates to the name of God, and the *hallowing* of it, or *sanctifying* of it, that is, the glorifying of it. So the first petition is for the glory of God's name. This is first of all put in our mouths, because of all things it should lie nearest our hearts.

In discoursing further from this subject, I shall shew,

I. What is meant by the name of God.

II. In what sense God's name is to be *hallowed*, or sanctified.

III. Why *hallowed* or sanctified, rather than glorified, since it is evident, that it is the glorifying of his name that is intended.

IV. What is the import of this petition.

V. Why this is the first petition that is put by our Saviour in our mouths.

VI. Deduce some inferences.

I. I shall shew, what is meant by the name of God.

1. God himself. So names are put for persons, Rev. iii. 4. 'Thou hast a few names in Sardis;' that is, a few persons. And the name of God is put for God himself, Deut. xxviii. 58. '—that thou mayst fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD.' Accordingly, as we pray here that God's name may be hallowed, or sanctified, so he tells us 'he will be sanctified,' Lev. x. 3.

2. Every thing whereby he makes himself known to his creatures, Psal. viii. 1. 'O Lord our Lord, how excellent



is thy name in all the earth !' These are his names, Jehovah, I am, &c. though there is no word sufficient fully to express what he is ; therefore his name is secret, wonderful, or incomprehensible, Judg. xiii. 18. His titles ; Old-Testament titles, as ' Hearer of prayer ;' New Testament ones, as, ' The God of peace, the God of patience and consolation,' Rom. xv. 33, 5. His attributes or perfections, Exod. xxxiv. 5. His word and ordinances, Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20. and his works, Job. xxxvi. 24. In a special manner, Jesus Christ, by whom, and through whom, and in whom God manifests himself to us, John i. 18. And God's name is in him. But of the various senses in which the name of God is taken, I spoke more largely in the exposition of the third commandment.

II. I am to shew, in what sense God's name is to be *hallowed*, or sanctified.

1. Not effectively, by making holy. ' Holy is his name.' He is infinitely holy, and cannot be made more holy. Whatever he is, whatever he says, whatever he does, is perfectly holy, and cannot be made more so, 1 John i. 5. Indeed he sanctifies his creatures by making them holy ; but himself is originally and eternally holy, incapable of any addition.

2. But manifestatively and declaratively, viz. when the holiness of his name is manifested, declared, shewn, and acknowledged, Isa. xxix. 23. ' They shall sanctify my name.' The holy name, in the dark parts of the earth, and in the dark men of the earth, is a candle under a bushel ; it has a glorious light, but it is not seen : the bushel being removed, and the splendour breaking forth to open view, it is hallowed : men then shew, declare, and acknowledge it.

III. I come to shew, why God's name is said to be *hallowed*, or sanctified, rather than glorified, since it is evident that it is the glorifying his name that is intended.

1. Because God's holiness is his glory in a peculiar manner, Exod. xv. 11.—' Glorious in holiness.' It is the glory of all his other attributes ; it is the beauty of them all, and of every one of them. It is an universal attribute which runs through all the other. It is that vein of infinite purity, that goes through the several letters of his name, and makes them shine in glory. Wherein lies the glory of God's wisdom,

power, mercy, &c. Why, it is in this, that his infinite wisdom is holy wisdom, his infinite power is holy power, &c. It is observed, that above thirty times in scripture God is called *The holy One*. And when the angels would pick out an attribute to glorify God most by, it is that of his holiness, Isa. vi. 3.

2. Because it is the manifesting of his holiness, in the communicating of it to the creature, that brings in the greatest revenue of glory from the creature to God. The truth is, none are fit to glorify him but those who are holy, 1 Pet. ii. 9. God stamps the image of his power and sovereign dominion upon one man, and sets him upon a throne; hence is the phrase, *Ye are gods*. He stamps the image of his holiness on another, and sets him on a dunghill. I say, God's name is more glorified by the holy poor man, than by the unholy monarch. The unholy man may glorify God passively, but the holy man glorifies him actively. And in no other way can God be actively glorified, but by the creature's first receiving a stamp and impression of his holiness on the heart.

IV. I proceed to shew, what is the import of this petition.

To clear this, consider that God's name is hallowed two ways.

1. By himself, manifesting the glory of his own holy name. And this he doth in all the discoveries which he makes of himself to his creatures.

2. By his creatures, they contributing to his glory, by shewing forth his praise, and declaring the glory of his name. So we pray in this petition.

1st, That God would, by his over-ruling providence, hallow his own name, and glorify himself, John xii. 28. The sins of men and devils are opposite to the honour of his name; the children of God in this petition put it in his own hands, to cause it shine forth notwithstanding, to dispose all things to his glory. Which may be taken up in three things.

(1.) That he would make the honour of his name to break through all impediments in the way of it, laid by men or devils, Psal. lxxix. 9. 'Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name,' says the church; that he would drive his triumphal chariot over all the opposition made to

it in the world, and appear unto men in his majesty and glory.

(2.) That he would make the honour of his name break forth from these impediments themselves, over-ruling the dishonour done to his name, to his honour, so bringing meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong. This he will do, Psal. lxxvi. 10. ‘Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee.’ And this his people pray for, Psal. lxxxiii. 17, 18. ‘Let them be confounded and troubled for ever, yea, let them be put to shame and perish: that men may know, that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the Most High over all the earth.’

(3.) That God would remove all these impediments, and shove off all the rubbish which the sins of men and devils have cast upon the honour of his name, that it may shine forth for ever without let or hinderance. And so it looks as far as the accomplishment of that passage, Rev. xx. 14. ‘And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.’

2dly, That God would, by his powerful grace, cause the sons of men, ourselves and others, to glorify him and hallow his name: q. d. Let thy name be hallowed by us. This supposes,

(1.) That it is our duty to glorify God, 1 Cor. x. 31.—‘whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.’ It is our main duty, and the chief work we have to do in the world. And whoso neglect it, are useless in the world: for their main work is neglected. They answer not the end of their creation.

(2.) That we cannot of ourselves do it, 2 Cor. iii. 5.—‘We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.’ We are weak and powerless, and so unfit for it; we are perverse and selfish, and so unwilling to it. Our strength for it is in God himself.

(3.) That God can fit and dispose us for it, Phil. iv. 13. ‘I can do all things,’ says the apostle, ‘through Christ which strengtheneth me.’ Grace can make us both able and willing. There is no person in any station whatsoever, but free grace can make of them happy instruments for honouring of his name; which should be a powerful motive to induce us to pray fervently for it, otherwise we will never actively glorify him.



Therefore we pray here, that grace may be bestowed on ourselves and others, whereby we and they may glorify him, which is the leading duty we have to mind in this world and that,

[1.] Internally, by knowing, acknowledging, and highly esteeming him, his names, titles, attributes, ordinances, words, and works, and so every thing whereby he makes himself known, Psal. lxxvii. 2, 3. This is to hallow that name in our hearts.

[2.] Externally, in our words and actions, speaking and living to his praise, Phil. i. 11. ‘Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.’

V. Why is this the first petition put by our Saviour in our mouths? The reason is, because the glory of God or honour of his name, is the chief end of our being, and of all others. And therefore it should lie nearest our hearts, Rom. xi. 36. ‘For of him, and through him and to him are all things. To whom be glory for ever.’ God’s glory is his own end in all his works, and it ought to be ours. We can no other way approve ourselves to him.

I shall conclude with some inferences.

*Inf.* 1. The dishonour done to God, by one’s own sin and the sins of others, must needs go near the heart of a saint, Psal. li. 4. ‘Against thee, thee only have I sinned,’ says David, ‘and done this evil in thy sight.’ And again, Psal. cxix. 136. ‘Rivers of waters run down mine eyes; because they kept not thy law.’ And to be grieved for our own loss by sins, and not for the dishonour done to God thereby; and to be unconcerned at the dishonour of God in the world by others, does not look like the disposition of a child of the family of heaven.

2. Habitual profaners of that holy name are none of the children of God, whose main care is to get that name hallowed. And how many such profaners of the sacred name of God are to be found in our day! They are so far from making conscience of hallowing that dreadful and fearful name, that they are daily employed in dishonouring it by the most horrid oaths and imprecations, and pouring upon it all the contempt they can, in open violation of the third command-

ment. How many do profane it by Atheism, Sabbath-breaking, uncleanness, perjury, intemperance, injustice, oppression, lying, stealing, backbiting, and other gross abominations, as if they had sold themselves to commit open hostilities against the King of heaven and run desperately upon the thick bosses of his buckler ! They wear the devil's mark on their foreheads, and openly declare to the world, that they are none of God's children.

3. Holiness is the creature's glory, and its greatest glory, for it is God's glory ; and therefore unholiness is its disgrace and dishonour. Ah ! unholy sinners, ye have lost your glory ; sin has disgraced you, and made you contemptible to God and all his holy family. O seek to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit of Christ, that so you may recover your forfeited glory, and no more lie under disgrace. It is only the saints that are the most excellent in the earth. Seek ye to be like them, by having the image of God drawn on your hearts, and walking holily as God is holy.

4. It is not the language of a child of God to say, ' Am I my brother's keeper ? ' as wicked Cain did : what is my business how such an one live or die ? Why truly, if thou belongest to God, it will be matter of thy hearty concern and prayer, that God may be honoured by others as well as by thyself. Without this concern a man cannot be a Christian ; he is not a child of God ; for every true believer ardently wishes and prays that God may be glorified ; and as far as his power, authority, influence, and example, can reach, he will use his utmost endeavours to induce others to glorify the name of his God. Were it in his power, he would leave no means unessayed to engage the whole world in this delightful work, that ' songs might be heard from the uttermost parts of the earth, even glory to the righteous.'

5. It is the disposition of a child of God, to submit his lot and condition in the world to the Lord, to be cut and carved as may serve his glory. Without this one cannot be a child of God. For it is inseparable from the character of such an one, in whatever state he is, therewith to be content. Hence the apostle Paul could say, ' As alway, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death,' Phil. i. 20.

6. It is the duty of all men to sanctify the holy name of

God, to reverence, adore and honour it, in their hearts, lips, and lives. O! let us then be excited to the practice of this duty, considering that it is the end for which God gave us a being; that if we do not hallow it, we contradict this very petition, praying for a thing we have no mind to comply with; that if we live in the neglect of this duty, God will get honour to himself by inflicting heavy judgments upon us in this life, and by making us eternal monuments of his vengeance in the next; that when we come to encounter with the king of terrors, it will tend to sweeten the awful prospect, that we have made it our business to glorify the name of God; that we will loose nothing, but be great gainers, by honouring the name of the Lord; for they that do so shall be reckoned among his jewels, and be a royal diadem in the Lord's hand; they shall be happy in death, and be safely conveyed to Immanuel's land where glory dwells. Let us then make it the principal business of our lives to glorify God, that so we may come to enjoy him for ever.

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THE SECOND PETITION.

MATTH. vi. 10.—*Thy Kingdom come.*

**A**S the first petition relates to the *name* of God, this second relates to the *kingdom* of God, the kingdom of our Father which is in heaven; the *coming* of which, that is the advancement thereof, is desired by all the children of God. And that is the great mean of glorifying his name; for then is his name hallowed, when his kingdom comes, is advanced and carried on, till it come to perfection.

In discoursing further from this subject, I shall shew,

- I. What is meant by *the kingdom of God*.
- II. What is the import of this petition, for its *coming*.
- III. The reasons of the concern of the children of God for the *coming* of *his kingdom*.
- IV. Apply.



I. I am to shew, what is meant by *the kingdom of God*. There is a fourfold kingdom of God mentioned in scripture.

1. The kingdom of his power, which reaches over all the world. The subjects of this kingdom are all creatures whatsoever, Psal. ciii. 19. 'His kingdom ruleth over all.' It reaches from the highest angel to the meanest worm that creeps on the earth. It is a vast dominion, comprehending heaven, earth, seas, and hell, and all that in them is. He made them all, and therefore has dominion over them all; and to him they must all submit themselves, willing or unwilling, Rom. xiv. 11. 'As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' Compare Phil. ii. 10, 11.—'At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' In this respect God is universal Monarch, and all the kings and emperors of the world are but his vassals.

2. The kingdom of his gospel, Matth. xxi. 43. 'The kingdom of God shall be taken from you,' says Christ to the Jews. This is not so large as the former. It is erected within it, but comprehendsthe whole visible church, in which God has set up the light of his gospel and Christ's name is known, and men profess subjection to him.

(1.) The subjects of it are all members of the visible church, whether godly or ungodly, sincere or hypocrites, (Matth. xiii. 47.), with their children. Even the worst of them are privileged persons, in comparison of those of the world without the church, Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20. 'He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them.'

(2.) The King of it is Jesus Christ, Psal. ii. 6. 'Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.' He is the alone Head of it, and only supreme in it. And neither Pope nor King can pretend to the supremacy over it, without invading his royal prerogative to their own cost, Eph. i. 22, 23. 'God hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.' And his glory he will not give to another.

(3.) The laws of it are the word of God. The Bible is

the book of the laws of the kingdom, which great and small within the kingdom are equally bound to walk by, Isa. viii. 20. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' These laws are attended with the most weighty sanction; and as they have the promise of eternal life of free grace to those who obey him, so they have the threatening of eternal wrath to the disobedient, suitable to the majesty of the King, Mark xvi. 16. 'He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.'

(4.) The ordinances of it are gospel-ordinances, instituted by the King himself, bearing his own signature, Matth. xxviii. 20. 'Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' And for men to pretend to add or alter, as if they were not bound up to the divine institution, is the product of their own blindness, and enmity against Zion's King, a saying in effect, 'We will not have this man to reign over us,' Luke xix. 27. 'For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King,' Isa. xxxiii. 22.

*Lastly*, The officers of it (ordinary) are, pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, Eph. iv. 11, 12; ruling elders for government, 1 Tim. v. 17; and deacons for the care of the poor, Acts vi. As for prelates or bishops, archbishops, metropolitans, &c. whatever is to be said of their persons, their offices belong not to the kingdom of Christ, but of Antichrist, as well as priests, cardinals, and popes, there being no institution of them in the book of the manner of Christ's kingdom.

3. The kingdom of his grace, Matth. vi. 33. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God,' &c. This is yet narrower than any of the former, and comprehends only the invisible church; for it is not an external, but an internal kingdom, in which grace, saving grace, reigns in the hearts of those who belong to it; for, says Christ to his disciples, 'behold the kingdom of God is within you,' Luke xvii. 21.

(1.) The subjects of it are believers, true saints, and they only; and they commence subjects of this kingdom in the day of Christ's power on their hearts, their new birth-day, Psal. cx. 3. Well may it be called a kingdom, for it is a kingdom of Kings, Rev. i. 6. as all the subjects of it are

‘made kings unto God.’ Out of prison (their natural state) they come to reign over their spiritual enemies.

(2.) The King of it is Christ, dwelling in their hearts, Eph. iii. 17; sitting in their hearts as on his throne, and all things else made his footstool, Luke xiv. 26. The gospel comes with power to the elect souls, Psal. xxiv. 8. The everlasting doors are lifted up, and the King makes his triumphant entry, and receives the crown at his entrance, Cant. iii. ult.

(3.) The laws of it are the laws of the Bible, but written over in their hearts, Heb. viii. 10. What others have in their book only, they have in their book and heart too; that is, inclinations of soul suited to the word are framed in them, which is a new nature, naturally disposing them to obedience without force. This is the law of their mind, Rom. vii. 23.

(4.) The ordinances of it are the same gospel ordinances, but observed in a spiritual manner, in spirit and in truth, John iv. 24. Phil. iii. 3. For this kingdom consists not in outward observances, but inward graces, Rom. xiv. 17. whereby the soul is conformed to the image of Christ, and the inner man serves the Lord Christ, as well as the outward man; for it is ‘not in word, but in power.’

*Lastly*, The Administrator of it is the Holy Spirit of Christ, John xiv. 16, 17. He teaches the subjects the laws of the kingdom. So they are taught of God. He enlivens, excites, and strengthens them to obedience. He leads them out to the war against their spiritual enemies, inspires them with courage and resolution in the conflict, and crowns them with victory. He makes use of the word for all this, and brings every thought into obedience, 2 Cor. x. 5.

4. The kingdom of his glory, 1 Cor. xv. 50. This is the blessed state of eternal happiness in the other world. This kingdom is now a-gathering, but shall fully come at the second coming of Christ.

(1.) The subjects of it shall be all the elect, being prepared for it by conversion, regeneration, justification, sanctification, and perseverance. This is the end of the golden chain, Rom. viii. 29, 30. (And the elect angels make up a part of this kingdom too). However long any of them lie among the pots, there shall none of them be left there, nor missing in that kingdom. There they shall be in body and soul too. For Christ will summon death to deliver him his



own, and then he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and present them spotless.

(2.) The King of it is God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, reigning most gloriously over all the kingdom, without the least degree of rebellion or uneasiness under the government among all the subjects, and without any mixture of enemies or malcontents among them, Luke xx. 36. This, then, is the kingdom by way of eminency, where the Lord reigns for ever and ever. The kingdom of his power has many malcontents in it, ready to quarrel with their Maker and his administration. The kingdom of the gospel has many adversaries, without and within men, and is held out of many nations. The kingdom of grace has no access to the hearts of many who hear the gospel; and where it is set up, ill neighbours, corrupt lusts, mar the progress. But in the kingdom of glory there are no such things.

(3.) The laws of it are the eternal law of righteousness, indelibly engraven on their hearts, without the least blot. There is no Bible needed there; for the rule of conduct is written on the mind, and the writing neither waxes old, nor can be erased.

(4.) The ordinances of it are perpetual praises and hallelujahs, never-ceasing songs to God and the Lamb. There is no temple there, for God and the Lamb are the temple thereof. There is no need of preaching or prayer; for perfect knowledge takes place, and every saint is made perfect and full, so as to seek no more. What is a stranger there; faith is swallowed up in vision, and hope in fruition.

*Lastly*, The Administrator of this heavenly kingdom is the Holy Spirit, but without any external means. He trained up the saints while in the world for this royal state, and at once, by his internal agency and invisible operations, disposed, fitted them for, and ever presides over them, in the delightful employments of the kingdom of glory, John xiv. 16. From what has been said,

USE. 1. Submit yourselves contentedly to the disposals of Providence. If God be King over all, is there any fault in the administration; nay, is not all well done, yea, best done? Let his sovereignty silence us; should it be according to thy mind? His infinite wisdom should satisfy us, who knows better than we do what is best for us, and can over-rule all things for his glory and our good.

2. Submit yourselves to the gospel sceptre. Are ye subjects of the gospel-kingdom? Then it becomes you to be subject to the laws, to observe the ordinances, and to be submissive to the officers of the kingdom. The contempt poured on these falls on the Prince of the kingdom. Beware then of transgressing or offending in this matter, lest ye incur the guilt of high treason against the majesty of Heaven, and the stone cut out of the mountain without hands fall upon you, and crush you to pieces. Answer the gospel-call, and let it have its due effect upon you, in submitting to the sceptre of Jesus Christ as King of Zion, and resigning yourselves wholly to him, as your Prophet, Priest, and Sovereign to be taught his will for your salvation, to be redeemed by his blood, sanctified by his Spirit, and to be ruled and governed by his laws as in the hand of the Mediator.

3. Let our royal Master have your hearts for his throne, and set up his kingdom of grace there. Let him sit enthroned there, without any rivals or competitors, and without any squint looks to any other sovereigns that may have had dominion over you, whether the devil, the world, or the flesh. Lie no more to him with your lips, nor offend him with any sinful or corrupt practices. Give him your hearts, and let them be his for ever, to meditate on his word and delight in his laws. There is no getting to the kingdom of glory without this. For all the loyal subjects of this kingdom are absolute nonconformists to the world, and are conformable to Christ their King in righteousness and holiness; and it is their study to be conformed to him more and more; and they are grieved that they are not so perfectly.

*Lastly*, Labour and be restless till ye get your interest in the kingdom of glory secured. And this is done by closing with Christ for all the ends for which he is given of God. It is dangerous to delay this. Therefore kiss the Son, lest he be angry. Now is the time, now or never.

II. I proceed to shew, what is the import of this petition for the *coming* of the kingdom of God. Here it is to be observed concerning this fourfold kingdom, that they are sweetly linked together, and stand in a line of subordination, the end of which is the kingdom of glory, the kingdom of grace being subordinated to it, the gospel-kingdom to that of grace, and the kingdom of power to the kingdom of the gospel. Therefore I must begin with the kingdom of glory.

*First*, What is the import of this petition with reference to the kingdom of glory? It imports,

1. That the kingdom of glory is not come yet, 1 John iii. 2. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be.' The King has not yet erected that kingdom. The King's coronation-day for that kingdom, 2 Thess. i. 10. is not yet come. That is a kingdom of perfect light and uninterrupted day. But the King's glory is yet under a veil in this world, through which only some rays are darted forth. It is night still, and till the day break, and the shadows flee away, the King has betaken himself to the mountains of myrrh, and to the hills of frankincense, Cant. vi. 6. And many of the designed subjects are yet lying among the pots, some of them yet in the devil's kingdom, some of them in their pilgrimage, some of them are got home indeed, but only half-home, having their souls in heaven, but their bodies in the grave.

2. That it will come. The King really designs it. From eternity he decreed it, John xvii. 24. 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.' He is gone to heaven, but he will surely come back again, and he will set up this kingdom, Acts i. 11. There are two things one may say with full assurance about it, though it is not come yet.

(1.) It shall certainly come up. It is impossible it can fail to be erected. The Father's truth, the Son's blood, and the Spirit's seal, are pledges of its erection. The Father has promised it, the Son purchased it, and the Spirit sealed it on the souls of all the saints. The King shall receive that crown, and the subjects theirs too, as low as some of them sit at this day, Matth. xxv. 31. 34.

(2.) It shall never come down, but last for ever. Many, sometimes famous, kingdoms in the world are now no more. The Assyrian, Chaldean, Persian, and Roman monarchies, as they came from below out of the sea, so they are all come to ruin. But this kingdom, as it is from above, so it shall never be destroyed, never swallowed up, nor succeeded by another, Dan. vii. 27. 'His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.'

3. That it is the duty and disposition of the saints and chil-



dren of God, to desire the coming of this kingdom, and that themselves and others may be brought into it, 2 Tim. iv. 8. And this their desire comprehends these four things.

(1.) The King's coming to receive his kingdom at the last day, Rev. xxii. 20. 'He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly.' The Spirit in the hearts of the saints, that cries, 'Abba, Father,' cries also, (as Judg. v. 28.) 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?' They would have swift time that runs like a post, and never halts, to put wings to its feet, to hasten their King's coming.

(2.) The destruction of the last enemy, death, 1 Cor. xv. 26. It is the last that will stand in the way of the erection of this kingdom of glory. But the King's summons, by the sound of the last trumpet, put in the hands of the grim tyrant, will give him the conquering stroke, cause the doors of the grave fly open, and loose his grips for ever of the bodies of his saints. And this they long for, and joy in the faith of it, 1 Cor. xv. 57.

(3.) The everlasting complete happiness of themselves and others in that kingdom, Psal. xiv. ult. Col. iii. 2, 3, 4. Every thing desires its own perfection, and therefore grace is natively carried out in desire after glory. If it were at the saint's choice, he would not live always, Job vii. 16. and therefore is coming up out of the world in affection or desires, Cant. viii. 5.

*Lastly,* The coming of the kingdom of grace, in order to all this. Which brings me to the second thing. But before I enter on that, I must answer a

*Case.* If this be the disposition of the saints, I am none: for Christ's coming is a terror to me, and how can I desire it? *Ans.* (1.) If this temper of spirit rise in thee from an habitual tastelessness and unsavouriness of holy, spiritual, and heavenly things, and from a reigning relish of the things of this present world, no wonder that Christ's coming be a terror to thee, and thou canst not desire it, more than any thing can desire to be out of its element, as fish to be dragged out of the sea. And while it is so with thee, I can speak no comfort to thee, Phil. iii. 18,—20. 'For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly; and whose glory

is in their shame, who mind earthly things. For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.'

(2.) But if holy, spiritual, and heavenly things have the predominant relish habitually in thy heart, and that sin and the world's vanities are unsavoury, in comparison of these; then, though it is often a terror to thee when thou thinkest on it, yet thou dost really desire it, though not expressly, yet interpretatively, ver. 20. And this I prove upon thee by two arguments.

1. Dost thou not desire to be perfectly freed from, and set beyond the reach of, sin and death! And dost thou not know, that that will never be till that day? Wherefore that desire to be freed from sin and death, has the desire of Christ's coming in the bosom of it, as the desire to have the festered member cut off, for the safety of the life, implies a desire of the surgeon's coming, who is to perform the operation, though it be a terror to the person.

2. Dost thou not desire communion with God, and full and complete communion with him in his glory, in soul and body? Thou knowest that that cannot be till he come, that all sin and sorrow will not be taken away, and this absolutely perfect happiness obtained till then. Wherefore this desire implies, that

Your terror may arise either from natural causes, or want of evidence of interest in Christ, or both together. Wherefore labour to assure your hearts before him by believing, Isa. xxxv. 4.

*Secondly*, What is the import of this petition with reference to the kingdom of grace? There is no getting into the kingdom of glory but by coming through that of grace. So that desiring the coming of the former, is desiring the coming of the latter too. It imports,

1. That all men naturally are without this kingdom, under the dominion of Satan, Eph. ii. 2, 3. 'In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.' These other lords have dominion over them. And as they are not sub-

jects of, so they have nothing to do with the privileges of the kingdom of grace.

2. That we cannot bring ourselves or others into it, John vi. 44. 'No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me draw him.' God alone can do it, Col. i. 13. It is he who 'translates us into the kingdom of his dear Son.' One will lie under the iron yoke for any thing he can do, till the power of grace break it. When one is brought into it himself, he cannot bring his nearest relations along with him. He may use the means, exhort, excite, &c. but can do no more.

3. That we cannot, where it is set up, maintain and advance it, against the enemies of it, 2 Cor. iii. 5. 'We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves.'—Satan, the world, and corrupt lusts, are the enemies of this kingdom, fighting against it continually, to extinguish it, and do retard its progress, Gal. v. 17. 'For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. And if there be not another power than our own to balance the opposition, it will give way before them.'

4. *Lastly*, That it is the duty and disposition of the children of God to desire, that the Lord himself may bring forward this kingdom, as Paul said to King Agrippa, 'I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am,' Acts xxvi. 29. This extends to,

(1.) The destruction of the power of sin and Satan over the hearts and lives of men, Psal. lxxviii. 1. 18. 'Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men: yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.' Every saint grudges the sway which these enemies bear in the world, and prays it down.

(2.) The conversion of sinners to God, 2 Thess. iii. 1. 'Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified.' Converts are the church's children, for which she travails in birth, in her ministers and members, as naturally longing for the conversion of souls, as a travailing woman to see the fruit of her womb.



(3.) The preserving and advancing to perfection the state of those who are in it already, ourselves or others, 1 Pet. v. 10. 'The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you. It is the joint desire of all who are brought into this kingdom, to be carried on and through, till they come to the kingdom of glory, both themselves and others.

*Lastly*, In order thereto, the coming of the kingdom of the gospel. This brings me to the

*Third* thing, What is the import of this petition with reference to the kingdom of the gospel? It is by the kingdom of the gospel that one is brought into the kingdom of grace. So desiring the coming of the one, we desire also the coming of the other. It imports,

1. That there are many impediments in the way of the propagation and efficacy of the gospel, which we cannot remove. The devil is the main agent against it, 1 Thess. ii. 18. 'Satan hindered us,' says Paul. Under him, the chief agents are the Turk and Antichrist; and every wicked man that has access to put hand to that work, all the world over; corrupt lusts in every man's heart, Luke xix. 14. and even the untenderness and unwatchfulness of good men.

2. That the Lord himself can shovel all the impediments out of the way, and make the gospel triumph over them all, persons or things, sins or troubles, that are laid in the way to hinder it, Isa. lvii. 14. 'Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people.'

3. That it is the duty and disposition of the children of God to desire the advancement of the kingdom of the gospel. It extends to,

(1.) The removal of the impediments out of its way in the world, 2 Thess. iii. 1. It is the desire of the saints, that Satan's power in the world may be broken. And they should all pray for the downfall of the Turk and Antichrist, for the purging of the church of corruptions, scandals, and divisions, and whatsoever hinders the progress of the gospel; and that peace and truth may be maintained.

(2.) The propagation of the gospel through the world, that it may be carried through all nations; that the Jews may be brought in, Rom. x. 1. and the fulness of the

Gentiles, Psal. lxvii. and that Christ may be King in all the earth.

(3.) The efficacy of it, to set up the kingdom of grace in men's hearts, 2 Thess. iii. 1. and that all things may be ordered to the advantage of it; the Spirit poured out from on high, the church furnished with gospel officers and ordinances, countenanced and protected by the magistrate, ministers made powerful and lively in their work, and the people tender and orderly in their walk, &c. all these things contributing to the success of the gospel.

*Lastly*, That God would exert his power for all this; which brings me to the

*Fourth* thing, What is the import of this petition with reference to the coming of God's kingdom of power? It is by the power of God that all these great things must be brought about. So the desiring of the coming of the gospel, is the desiring of the coming of this kingdom too. It imports,

1. That these things will not be done, unless Omnipotency interpose. The work is great, the hands employed in it are feeble, and there is great opposition. It will stick, if heaven put not to a helping hand.

2. That it is the duty and disposition of the children of God, to desire that God would exercise the kingdom of his power in the world, as may best conduce to these ends, Isa. lxiv. 1. 2. 'Oh that thou wouldst rent the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence. As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence.'

USE. Shew yourselves of the family of heaven, by your concern that the Lord's kingdom may come, even that of glory, grace, the gospel, and power. For this is the language of those who cry unto God, 'Abba, Father.' Let this be a petition in every one of your prayers, private or secret. And contribute ye your best endeavours for promoting this glorious end. And let your life and practice shew to the world, that ye have the interests of God's kingdom at heart.

III. I proceed to shew, the reasons of the concern of the children of God for the coming of his kingdom.

1. The new nature in them moves that way, Isa. xliii. 21.

‘ This people have I formed for myself ; they shall shew forth my praise.’ It is from heaven, and aspires to heaven, and is heavenly in its motions, Phil. iii. 20. ‘ Our conversation is in heaven,’ Rom. viii. 5. ‘ They that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit.’ As by our first birth we join and addict ourselves to the interests of hell, Psal. lviii. 3. ‘ The wicked are estranged from the womb ; they go astray, as soon as they be born, speaking lies ; so one by the new birth joins interests with heaven. So that the meanest saint has a natural concern for the kingdom of Christ’s thriving, the Spirit put in them being a public Spirit.

2. It is their Father’s kingdom. How then can the children not be concerned for it ? Matth. vi. 9, 10. Their Father’s honour must be dear to them, Mal. i. 6. ‘ If I be a Father, where is mine honour ?’ The further on his kingdom goes, the more his glory is advanced ; and they have the more satisfaction, as children, in their father’s honour.

3. Their own interest lies in it. They are willing subjects of the kingdom of his power. They are subjects, not only of the kingdom of the gospel, but of the kingdom of grace, and designed subjects of the kingdom of glory. So in its good their own is wrapt up. See Jer. xxix. 7. Their all is in this ship. No wonder, then, that they be concerned that it come safe to land. When it does, they are made up for ever : if it were possible that it could be cast away, they are ruined.

4. Their brethren’s interest lies in it too, Psal. cxxii. 8. All the saints are born brethren. The more the kingdom is advanced, it is the better with them ; and the more it is retarded, it is the worse, Psal. ciii. 16, 17. For be it foul or fair, their lot is in it, and it fares with them as with it. Their brethren yet unborn, all the elect not yet converted, some of them come, some but coming into the world, Cant. viii. 8. Should the kingdom of God be taken away, what should become of perishing souls ? If the net of the gospel be folded up, how shall the fish be caught ? If the Lord leave our mother, how shall children be brought forth into God ?

5. *Lastly*, The ruin of the enemies interest lies in it too. Every kingdom has its enemies. There is an irreconcilable war betwixt the devil’s kingdom and Christ’s. It was proclaimed in paradise, Gen. iii. 15. ‘ I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her



seed.' It never was, nor will be, taken up by a peace ; it must end in the ruin of one of the two. As the one goes up, the other goes down ; and the perfection of Christ's kingdom will be the destruction of the other. No wonder, then, that all the King's children cry, *Thy kingdom come.*

I shall now make some practical improvement of this subject, in uses of information, trial, and exhortation.

USE I. Of information. From what is said, learn,

1. The excellency, usefulness, and necessity of the glorious gospel. It is the kingdom of God.

(1.) It is a most excellent thing, precious in itself, and in the eyes of all the saints, 2 Pet. i. 4. It is more excellent than all the kingdoms of the earth ; for it is the kingdom of God, Matth. xxi. 43. It is a field wherein a treasure lies, which, whoso discover, will part with all, if it were crowns and kingdoms, to gain it, Matth. xiii. 44. And a thousand times happy the man, who can call the field his own.

(2.) It is most useful ; for it is the way by which one is brought into the kingdom of grace, and so to glory, Acts xxvi. 18. It is the sword of the Spirit, by which sinners are subdued to Christ, the devil's nest is rifled, his power over sinners broken, and his kingdom brought down. It is the sinners life, the saints health, and the instrument of all spiritual good to them.

(3.) It is most necessary, as the kingdom of God among men, without which they are in a miserable plight, the devil ruling among them at his will, Psal. lxxiv. 20. 'The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.' It is the key of the kingdom of grace, and opens the door of access to heaven. The world might better want the sun in the firmament, than want the gospel. It is the 'light shining in a dark place,' 2 Pet. i. 19. to guide our feet in the way to eternal happiness.

2. That the cry for the ruin of the kingdom of God, can be no other but the cry of the family of hell. Yet many join in it, saying, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us,' Psal. ii. 3. 'We will not have this man to reign over us,' Luke xix. 14. The gospel-kingdom is the great eye-sore to the devil ; and if he could reach it, he would destroy it. Sometimes his chain is

lengthened, and his forces are raised to raze the temple of God among men. And then multitudes of great and small list themselves in his service, in the unholy war against the church. And then they ‘roar in the midst of the congregations; they set up their ensigns for signs:’ and ‘they break down the carved work thereof at once, with axes and hammers,’ Psal. lxxiv. 4, 6. But their cry is the cry of hell.

3. That the kingdom of our Lord will triumph over all its enemies, and drive over all opposition. For if what two agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, Matth. xviii. 19. shall be done for them, much more what all the saints on earth make their joint request. The devil’s kingdom, and Antichrist’s kingdom, though malignants lend their hand to carry it on, shall fall before the prayers of all the saints, and they in the ruins of it, if they quit not the Antichristian interest. If Christ’s kingdom were ever so low, the joint prayers of the saints will raise it up.

4. No wonder that most men’s prayers be not heard, for their hearts and lives contradict them quite, Prov. xxviii. 9. ‘He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.’ They pray, that God’s kingdom may come; yet they will not submit to it themselves. They cannot be bound with the laws of the kingdom of the gospel, they are strangers to that of grace, and the kingdom of glory is not their choice, if they could do otherwise. Christ says to such, ‘Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?’ Luke vi. 46. Remember, Sirs, that ‘the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power,’ 1 Cor. iv. 20. The devil’s kindly subjects may pretend a great concern for the kingdom of God. But what matter is that? It is but a pretence, while the kingdom of God is not within them, but sin reigns in their hearts.

5. *Lastly*, It is sad work to be employed in hindering the advancement of the kingdom of God, whether men pursue it openly or covertly. For it is driving contrary to the prayers of all saints. Persecution is a sad piece of work, but the devil is known there by his cloven foot. But scandalous practices, and fiery divisions, in the church, are apt to do more mischief to the kingdom of Christ. For whatever zeal for it the authors of them do pretend, one thing is evident, that the way to the getting good of the gospel is filled full

of stumbling-blocks, and the poor blind graceless world are thereby taught to despise the means of grace. It must needs be fearful opposition to the kingdom of Christ, that is thus written in the blood of perishing souls.

USE II. Of trial. Try by this whether ye be of the family of God or not. Have ye a kindly concern for the coming of his kingdom? Do your hearts say within you, *Thy kingdom come?* If it be not so, God is not your Father; but if so, he is. How shall that kindly concern be known? If it be of the right sort,

1. It will be a judicious deliberate concern, on a fair view of the nature of the kingdom, Matth. xiii. 45, 46. Many have a concern for the kingdom of Christ, who indeed know not what it is. The Jews had a mighty zeal for it, upon a mistake: and when it came to them, not answering the notion they had formed of it, they opposed it with all their might. But if ye be concerned for it, on a right view of it from the Lord's word, as a kingdom of true holiness, it is well.

2. An universal concern for it, for the kingdom of power, the gospel, grace, and glory. Ye will be concerned that God would exercise his power, for the advancing of the gospel; that the gospel may have its due effect on yourselves and others; that Christ may sway his sceptre in your hearts; and that holiness may be perfected in glory.—You will not only be concerned for the kingdom without you, but for the kingdom within you; not for the kingdom within you only, but without you too.

3. An active concern for it, not in wishing and woulding only, but putting to your hand to get it forward, 1 Cor. iv. 20. 'For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power; And this ye will do, as ye have access in the world, and particularly in your own hearts and lives. It will set you to keep up a constant war with the enemies, the devil, the world, and your own lusts.

4. *Lastly*, A superlative concern for it, mastering and swallowing up all other concerns. You will say as the captives in Babylon did, 'If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy,' Psal. cxxxvii. 6. For if ye belong to God, your chief interest is in that kingdom; and where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.



USE III. and last, Of exhortation. I exhort you to join issue this day with Zion's King, to have common friends and enemies with him, come what will. Set yourselves against the kingdom of sin and Satan in the world and your own hearts; Psal. ii. ult. 'Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.' And do ye exert heart and hand, that his kingdom may come. In this matter ye cannot be neutral: 'For he that is not with me,' says Christ, 'is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad,' Matth. xii. 30. Therefore, if ye be not with heart and hand set for the advancement of this kingdom, I declare you enemies to it. Come then,

*First*, Be concerned that the kingdom of God's power may come; that he may stretch out his almighty arm, and gain ground to himself in the world.

1. It is an universal kingdom. All is in his hand. He can reach to the ends of the earth. It extends over all persons and things; and he can make all things subserve his purposes. He can display his glorious arm in bringing in shoals of volunteers into the kingdom of grace, and utterly root out all the legions of hell that are in combination against him.

2. It is an uncontrollable kingdom. None can resist him more than the clay can resist the potter, Dan. iv. 35. 'He doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?' He will work, and who can let it? It is in vain to contend with this almighty Sovereign; for he can easily conquer all his enemies, as easily as he caused the Red Sea swallow up Pharaoh and all his host. He can baffle all the machinations and plots of his adversaries, disconcert their best-laid projects, and make them retreat with shame and confusion. These are great encouragements for this concern.

*Secondly*, Be concerned that the kingdom of the gospel may come. For motives, consider,

1. That it is not an universal kingdom, but a narrow one, and that it is to be enlarged. For Christ has declared, 'that this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations,' Matth. xxiv. 14. Though now this kingdom be confined within narrow bounds,

yet it shall, according to Christ's promise, have a more diffusive spread; and the time will come when the Jews shall be brought in with the fulness of the Gentiles, and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ.

2. It is a moveable kingdom. It may be taken from them that have it. Christ may remove his throne, as he did from the Jews, Matth. xxi. 43. and as he has done in many once famous churches. Where are now the seven churches in the Lesser Asia? and where are many of those churches that were planted by the apostle of the Gentiles? Alas! their candlestick has been long ago removed out of its place, and the delusions of Mahomet prevail in those places where once the pure doctrines of the gospel were preached. Though Christ will always have a church on earth, yet it is confined to no particular country or place. And therefore, we in this land should earnestly pray, that the kingdom of the gospel may come more illustriously among us, and that it may continue with us to the end of time, that we may still see many days of the Son of man, and that the candle of gospel-light may ever shine brightly among us. These considerations should influence us always to pray, that Christ's gospel-kingdom may come among us, and be spread through the world.

*Thirdly*, Be concerned, that the kingdom of grace may come. Consider,

1. It is a kingdom that easily gets a back-set, Cant. ii. 15. It may be thriving in a soul this moment, and the next going to decay. There is need of much faith and watchfulness for preserving and maintaining it. A multitude of formidable foes are still opposing it, and all the subjects of it have no power to resist them. They must look to their Captain-General, and be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. It is only through him that they can do valiantly; for it is he alone who treads down their enemies under their feet. And through him they shall be more than conquerors. Trust ye then in the Lord for ever; for with the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. Be sober, then, and watch unto prayer, lest ye fall into temptation. Cry unto your King, for he will save you, and gradually overcome all your enemies.

2. Yet this is a kingdom that can never be overturned, never removed, Heb. xii. 8. It is a spark of fire in the midst

of an ocean, that can never be quite drowned or extinguished. The bruised reed shall not be broken, and the smoking flax shall never be quenched. All the combinations of adversaries, however formidable, shall never overturn this kingdom; for the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. It is built on the Rock Christ, and all the surges and waves of the dragon's flood shall never overturn the edifice. The name of this city is, 'The Lord is there.' Of this kingdom of grace, it may well be said, 'Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us,' Isa. viii. 9, 10. These are powerful considerations for inducing you to a hearty concern for the coming of this kingdom of grace.

*Fourthly*, Be concerned that the kingdom of glory may come. Consider,

1. Sin and trouble will have an end put to them there. The stage of sin and vanity will then be put down for ever, and none of the scenes that have so much vexed the righteous here, will ever be exhibited again. All corruptions, temptations, and backslidings from God, will then come to a final period. All bodily trouble and spiritual distress shall cease, and never more be heard of.

2. Grace and happiness will then arrive at their full perfection. The mystery of God will then be finished. Then will God's kingdom of power, of the gospel, and of grace, fully obtain their end; and all the subjects of Christ shall be completely blessed in the full enjoyment of him forevermore. Let us all then say, Let the kingdom of glory be hastened. Amen.



#### THE THIRD PETITION.

MATTH. vi. 10.—*Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.*

**T**HIS third petition relates to the *will of God*, the *doing* of which is desired by all the children of God. And



as by the coming of his kingdom his name is hallowed, so by doing of his will his kingdom comes, or is advanced, and we own him to be our King, Heb. xiii. 21. So all these three petitions meet in one great desirable point, viz. the glory of God. This is the scope of them all.

Observe here, by the by, that we are directed to speak to God in prayer as to one. Hallowed be *thy name*, not *your name*: *Thy will* be done, not *your will*. Wherefore, then, should any forsake such a form of sound words, for such a harsh one, as speaks to God by *ye* and *your*, *your Majesty*, *ye know all things*, &c.? I will not insist on what may be said to defend it, from the plurality of persons in the Godhead, the manner of speaking to kings, and from common conversation, (those who use it, I suppose, doing it rather from custom than judgment). But it is not the scripture-way of speaking to God; it is not the way of this pattern of prayer; it is offensive to, and grating in the ears of the most part of Christians, as savouring of the opinion of the plurality of Gods, and therefore ought to be forsaken. I may well say in this case, ‘But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God,’ 1 Cor. xi. 16.

In discoursing from this petition, I shall shew,

I. What is meant by the *will of God*.

II. By whom is *God’s will done in heaven*.

III. What is the import of this petition.

IV. The reasons why the saints have such a concern, that the *will of God may be done in earth as it is in heaven*.

V. Apply.

I. I am to shew, what is meant by *the will of God*. By it we are to understand the will of his commands, and the will of his providence.

*First*, The will of God’s commands, Heb. xiii. 21. ‘Make you perfect in every good work to do his will.’ Matth. vii. 21. ‘He that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.’ His is the kingdom over all creatures; he sits on the throne of his power, and gives out his will to all the rational world, which they are bound to obey, as the King’s will, and laws of his kingdom, determining what they ought to do, and what to forbear. The church has that will of the King in all

points in the Bible. In heaven, all do it ; in hell, none do it ; in earth, some do it, others not ; and those who do it, do it but imperfectly. So we pray, *Thy will be done.*

The will of God's commands is exceeding comprehensive Psal. cxix. 96. 'Thy commandment is exceeding broad.' It is but one will of God ; but the objects of it, the things willed are many : but as many as they are sincere Christians do sincerely fulfil them, though not perfectly, Acts xiii. 22. 'I have found David,—a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will,' Gr. 'all my wills.' This whole will of God, however, may be reduced to two heads, viz. faith, and holiness.

1. Faith, 1 John iii. 23. 'This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.' And this is comprehended in that, Matth. vii. 21. 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.' Ye are to look on it as the Father's will, the will of God, that ye believe in his Son, 2 Cor. viii. 5. 'They gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.' It is the great thing which he wills you to do, John vi. 29. 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' His dinner is prepared, he wills you to come to the marriage, Matth. xxii.

2. This answers all the objections, I may not, I dare not, I will not be welcome. It is God's will that ye come forward. And ye have the prayers of all the saints to help you forward, *Thy will be done,* And the crossing of this will of God will ensure your ruin, more than any thing else, John iii. 18. 'He that believeth not is condemned already.' Mark xvi. 16. 'He that believeth not shall be damned.'

(1.) Faith is the first and leading will of God, 1 John iii. 23. forecited. If ye would do any part of the will of God, believe : for ye can do none of it, if ye do not this, Heb. xi. 6. 'For without faith it is impossible to please God.' John. xv. 5. 'Without me ye can do nothing.' If ye do not begin with believing, all that ye do is nothing. As in arithmetic, if a thousand cyphers be set in a line, they are nothing, but if begun with a figure, they are all something ; so believe, and the rest will be the obedience of faith.

(2.) Faith is the last will of God. It is the Lord's last will, that ye believe in Christ, Mark xvi. 16. 'He that believeth

shall be saved.' John iii. 16. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' The Lord's will to man at first was, 'Do this and live.' Now he cannot do that; but that he may not perish, his will now in the second covenant is, 'Believe, and ye shall be saved.' The first not being complied with, the second came for man's help: but this second is the last. If ye do not believe, there is no third to be looked for, but fiery indignation, Heb. x. 26, 27.

2. Holiness, 1 Thess. iv. 3. 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification.' God is a holy God, and cannot will unholiness. It is Satan's will, and your own corrupt will, that ye be unholy. But therein ye contradict the will of God, Rom. viii. 7. 'Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Every unholy thought, word, or action, is a going cross to the will of God, and therefore sinners are said to 'vex his holy spirit,' Isa. lxiii. 10. as men are vexed when their will is still contradicted and crossed. Holiness is,

(1.) The will of God's nature, 1 Pet. i. 16. 'Be ye holy, as I am holy.' God has willed men to be holy; and it was inconsistent with his nature to have willed them to be unholy. Faith in a crucified Redeemer is God's will of free choice. He did not will innocent Adam to believe in a Mediator. He might, if he had pleased, never have provided that object of faith, and so there might never have been such a thing as faith in a Redeemer. But having once made man, he could not but will him to be a holy man. And fire and water may sooner agree than God's will and unholiness.

(2.) The will of his whole law. It is all pure, Psal. xix. 8. A vein of holiness runs through the whole of it, and through every part. All the ten commandments are so many laws of holiness; all the enlargements on them in the Bible are so many directions and instructions for holiness of heart and life. There the Lord has parcelled out his will in so many particulars, but holiness is the scope of them all.

(3.) The will of God to all men, yea, all the rational creatures. That reason, 'Be ye holy, as I am holy,' 1 Pet. i. 16. reaches all. The devils will not be condemned because they do not believe in Christ; they have no warrant to believe in him, the gospel-offer is not made to them, Heb. ii.



16. Prov. viii. 4. but because they are unholy. The pagans will not be condemned neither for their unbelief, Rom. ii. 12. for the gospel is not revealed to them, but because they are unholy, Rom. i. 8. 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.'

*Secondly*, The will of God's providence, Psal. cxxxv. 6. 'Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.' He sits in heaven universal monarch of the world, and has the disposal of all his creatures, and all that concern them, in his hand, and is accountable to none for his disposals, Dan. iv. 35. forecited. They are all his own, as being created by him, and for him; and so he may do with them as the potter with his own clay, Matth. xx. 15. Now this will of God's providence may be considered two ways.

1. As directing to duty, Psal. xxxii. 8. 'I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go.' God speaks by his works as well as by his word. The whole world have this sort of speech made from heaven to them Psal. xix. 1.—3. 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard.' Providence serves to point men to particular pieces of service, Gal. vi. 10. 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.' And therefore we must not be idle spectators of Providence, Psal. cvii. ult. 'Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.' But we must observe the language and meaning thereof, proving what is the good and acceptable will of God to us in it.

3. As ordering and disposing of events about ourselves and others, Matth. x. 29, 30. 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.' The world is a great family, under the conduct and management of an infinitely wise Master. And, for as broad and wide as it lies, his eye is in every part of it, and his hand too. And there is no person or thing but is under his providence; and whatever befalls them is their portion or lot appointed by the great Master.

This all-disposing will of Providence reaches particulars, with respect to men, to us innumerable, even all that concerns them. But they may be reduced to two heads.

(1.) Smiling providences, in favourable dispensations, Rom. ii. 4. The unthankful world is filled with these, for he doth good even to the unthankful and the unholy. Every day his table is spread, and he loads men with his benefits; though the mess of some may be double to that of others, yet all feed at his cost.

(2.) Frowning providences, Micah vi. 9. ‘The Lord’s voice crieth unto the city.—Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it;’ and this in afflicting dispensations. It is the same God who draws the white lines in one’s lot, that draws the black ones too. It is the same hand that puts on the crown of prosperity, that pulls it off again. The same God who gives the fair weather, also sends the foul, and after the blink the shower, and the clouds after the rain. If it go ill with a land, with a congregation, or with one’s house, it is the will of the Lord that it should be so.

And to all we are to say, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,*

II. I proceed to shew, by whom is God’s will done in heaven.

1. By the bodies of heaven, the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and stars. God their Creator, when he made them, appointed their ends, motions, and courses; and these they have steadily observed from the time of their creation, Psal. cxix. 89, 91. For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.’ The scoffers observe this, 2 Pet. iii. 4. ‘All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation,’ though they make a very bad use of it. Though in the heavenly fabric, these bodies are hugely great, and there are so many of them that men cannot number them, yet have they all, from the beginning to this day, observed and kept their motions and courses, without any breach of order, or any deviation whatsoever. In the mean time it is notorious, that engines made by men, and consisting of many wheels, with a variety of motions, are very hard to be kept right long, but they go out of their course. But these do the will of God steadily, evenly, and

unweariedly, Psal. xix. 5, 6. ‘The sun is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.’ The sun and moon’s standing still in Joshua’s time, was no faltering nor disorder in their course, but it was in obedience to a particular will of God. And thus they cast us a fair copy of doing the will of God on earth.

2. By the angels of heaven. These glorious spirits, attendants of the great King, are obedient to the nod of their Maker, and fall in with every the least intimation of his will, Psal. ciii. 21. They ‘do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.’ Though they ‘excel in strength,’ they entertain not the least thought of disputing his orders, ver. 20. They never put in an exception against the meanest piece of service that God puts in their hands, but are well content to minister unto worm man, Heb. i. ult. ‘Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?’ They never use any shifts or offputs in the doing of his will; but when he speaks the word, it is done by them; the orders are readily and cheerfully complied with. Thus they also cast us a fair copy of doing the will of God, a copy of rational obedience. The saints in heaven do his will also after the same manner, Rev. vii. 5. having got a full answer of this petition as to themselves.

III. I shall now shew, what is the import of this petition, both with respect to the will of God’s command, and his will of providence.

FIRST, I am to shew, the import of this petition with reference to the will of God’s command. It imports something confessed, professed, and desired.

*First*, Something confessed. The children of God coming to him with this petition, confess, that,

1. The will of God is not done on earth as it is in heaven. There is no question but that all men on earth are obliged to do it with the same perfection as those in heaven do it, Matth. v. ult. ‘Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’ But, alas! it is not done. God has given men on earth his commands, and notified his will to



them; but it is not complied with. Though the higher world abides to this day in obedience to its Maker, yet the frame of the lower rational world is quite marred and unhinged. Though above there is a perfect calm, yet below a most unnatural rebellion is raised and continued, so that it is a region of disorder and confusion.

*1st*, Most men make their own will, and not God's, their law, and the rule of their actions, Rom. viii. 7: 'The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' All unregenerate men have shaken off the yoke of subjection to God, and instead of serving God, 'serve divers lusts and pleasures,' Tit. iii. 3. If at any time they fall in with what is materially the will of God they do it, not because it is God's will, but because it is their own, and serves their own ends, as the Pharisees did in their almsgiving and prayers, &c. Matth. vi. 1.

*2dly*, The best men carry the yoke of subjection to the will of God very unevenly, Gal. v. 17. Though they are sincere, they are far from being perfect in doing the will of God. Their own will carries them aside in many things: though they sincerely design the shore for Immanuel's land, they keep not a straight course. The wind of temptations, and their own unruly passions, oft-times blow them aside, so that they are in danger of splitting on the rocks.

2. There is in all men naturally an utter indisposition and unfitness for the will of God's command. There was a sweet harmony betwixt the will of God and the powers of man's soul at first, Eccl. vii. 29. but that is gone. Sin has broken the concord, and marred the harmony; so that there is a sad jarring betwixt the two now. They are indisposed,

*1st*, For knowing it, for discerning what the will of God is, 1 Cor. ii. 14. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned.' Sin has raised a mist, so that the travellers cannot know the way, but are apt to chuse by-paths of destruction, instead of the King's high-way; to call evil good, and good evil: to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.

*2dly*, For doing it, Psal. xiv. 3. 'There is none that doth good, no not one.' They are bunglers at that work, at best, they have lost the holy art of going by that rule. They have no skill of steering their course to the shore of Imma-

nuel's land. Man naturally is under a threefold indisposition to it.

(1.) An inability to know or do the will of God. He has no head for it, 1 Cor. ii. 14. just above quoted. Like Samson, we have lost our two eyes in that point. The gospel is a doctrine of mysteries, that requires a saving illumination to understand it, Eph. i. 17. Even the law itself in its spirituality is not discerned without a new light from the Lord, Rom. vii. 9. And we have no hands for it neither, John xv. 5. 2 Cor. iii. 5. It is above our natural reach.

(2.) An unwillingness to know or do it. As we have neither head nor hand for it, so we have no heart for it neither, till a day of power change our hearts, Psal. cx. 3. And hence it is that the truths of God which are practical are neglected, as not desired, Job xxi. 14. And when they force their entry into the head, they are held prisoners there, that they may not exert their efficacy in the heart, Rom. i. 18. And much more unwilling are we to do it, Hos. iv. 16. 'Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer.'

(3.) A bias in the will to the wrong side, a bent and propensity to follow our own will, and the lusts of our own heart, Psal. xiv. 1. 'There is no God,' is the language of every man's heart by nature. They would set up themselves for their own rule and their own end, and contend with their Maker for the sovereignty, that it should be according to their own will with them, and not according to his. Again, it imports,

*Secondly*, Something professed. The children of God, coming to their Father with this profession, profess, that,

1. It is the grief of their hearts, that God's will is not done by themselves or others, as it is done in heaven, Matt. xxi. 29. Psal. cxix. 136. A gracious person has the law written in his heart. He knows it, and esteems it to be righteous in all things, the doing of it to be both one's duty and interest, Psal. cxix. 128. The heart inclines to the doing of it, though corruption and temptation drive him by it, Gal. v. 17. Hence proceeds sorrow of heart, that it is not done.

2. That God by the power of his grace, is able to reform this, and to frame the souls of men on earth to the doing his will, as in heaven, Prov. xxi. 1. He can new-frame men's will, give it a new bent of conformity to his own, and fix it too therein, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. So they put their own and

others hearts in God's hand, that he may set them in a way of obedience, Psal. cxix. 36. It imports also,

*Thirdly*, Something desired. And there are two things here desired of God by all the saints.

1. That he would by his grace remove from themselves and others all spiritual blindness and cause them to know his will, Eph. i. 17, 18, There can be no doing of God's will, without first knowing what it is, Rom. xiv. ult. For suppose one to do what God requires, who yet does not know that he requires it, it is plain that one in such a case does it, not because it is the will of God, but because it is his own. There is a natural blindness in all, and the remains of it are in the regenerate. This hides the will of God from them in many particulars, and so hinders them from doing it. But the children of God desire to know it in all things.

This desire to know the will of God is a mark of sincerity, if it be attended with these two properties.

(1.) If it be universal, if the soul really desires to know the whole will of God, Rom. vii. 22; not only some shreds of the law, but the whole law, Psal. cxix. 6. Hypocrites may desire to know some parts of God's will, which are most agreeable to their own ends and inclinations. But happy they whose souls are opened to receive the intimations of the divine will in all things.

(2.) If it be practical, if they desire to know his whole will that they may conform themselves to it, Psal. ciii. 18. There may be a desire of the knowledge of God's will for speculation, to know it for the sake of knowledge, which may be found in the ungodly. But to desire the knowledge of it for the sake of practice, is a mark of sincerity.

Such a desire is a sure mark; because,

[1.] It evidences a heart reconciled to the whole will of God, Heb. viii. 10. The unrenewed heart is never so reconciled, Rom. viii. 7. And therefore, since they have no inclination to let in the whole law into their heart, they do what they can to keep it out of their heads, and are willingly ignorant of what they are unwilling to practice, Job xxi. 14.

[2.] It evidences a heart ready to part with every known sin, with any thing whatsoever, upon the discovery of its contrariety to the will of God, Psal. xix. 12. It is an evidence of an honest heart to be content to be searched, Psal. cxxxix.



23 ; but those who harbour deceit, will be unwilling to let in the discovering light, Jer. ix. 6.

2. That God by his grace would remove from themselves and others, all weakness, indisposition, and perverseness, and cause them to obey and do his will, as it is done in heaven, Psal. cxix. 35. So this desire extends to,

(1.) The removal of the impediments of dutiful obedience to the will of God. The children of God are sensible of the obligation lying on all to conform to the will of God in all things; but withal, that there is in them,

[1.] A weakness, obstructing their obedience, which they would fain have removed, Eph. iii. 16. The weak knees, the feeble hands, fail them when they would ever so fain do his will. These are their burden, and these they lay before the Lord daily for strengthening, longing for the day when the executive power shall be answerable to their will, and their will to the will of God.

[2.] An indisposition, hindering their obedience, which they would fain be rid of, Matth. xxvi. 41. The gracious heart itself has such a mixture of corruption, that there is always a spice of backwardness to compliance with the will of God, and an inclination to the wrong side which they have to strive with. This is as iron fetters on them, out of which they would be enlarged, to run the way of God's commandments.

[3.] A perverseness of spirit, whereby one is inclined to resist and go quite contrary to the will of God. Ephraim complains of this, Jer. xxxi. 18. 'I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.' And the remainders of it in the best occasion them many a sad struggle; by which the heart of a child of God is like a field of battle; the new nature endeavouring to take on the yoke, the corrupt nature resisting, and shifting, like an untamed ox.

(2.) God's advancing them to, and fixing them in a course of dutiful obedience to his own will, that they may do it as it is done in heaven. They look on perfect holiness as what would be their happiness. They see the will of God how it is done in heaven; they approve and love that way of it, and condemn their own, and would fain be brought up to the

way of heavenly obedience, being wearied of their own earthly heartless way of doing it.

*Quest.* What signifies their praying for it, since they cannot obtain it while here? *Ans.* It speaks,

1. Their sense of duty in that case, and of their failings in their best performances. It is certain that perfection as well as sincerity of obedience is our duty, though we cannot reach it, Matth. v. ult. 'Be ye perfect,' &c. And when the saints have stretched out to the utmost, they sit down sighing, that they cannot get the length they should, Luke xvii. 16.

2. Their desire of perfection, which is accepted of God, 2 Cor. viii. 12. They would do the will of God on earth as it is in heaven, if they could. That is the bent and disposition of their new nature, and they would as fain be rid of the remainders of corruption, as ever a prisoner was desirous of being rid of his chains, Rom. vii. 24. while others please themselves therewith as with golden chains.

3. Their sincere endeavour to get forward to that perfection. Though, the stormy wind blowing in the face of the weak creature, they cannot hold pace with those in heaven in doing the will of God; yet they are still following them at a distance, if at length they may get up with them, Phil. iii. 13, 14. And here, as in a glass, we may see what sort of doing of the will of God the saints aim at, and desire. It is,

(1.) To do it evenly, without stumbling or changing their course. So the heavenly bodies and the angels are uniform in their course, Psal. cxix. 91. But, alas! what an unevenness is there in the walk of the best! Sometimes they are warm in obedience, and again key-cold. Sometimes they are tender with respect to the least of sins, and sometimes untender in great matters, according as grace or corruption gets the mastery. But all the saints are ashamed of this, and groan under the burden of it, longing for the day wherein they shall keep a stayed even course of obedience, as it is in heaven.

(2.) To do it unweariedly. Thus it is done in heaven, Psal. xix. 5. 'The sun is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race,' Rev. vii. 15. 'They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.' There is no wearying of this doing of the will of God in heaven. But, alas!

how soon are we on earth weary of well-doing? Even when the spirit is willing, the clog of earth which the soul is fixed to often sets up, and can go no farther. This often makes them long to be dissolved, that without weariness they may be capable to serve the Lord day and night in his temple.

(3.) To do it universally. So the angels do it, knowing all, and doing all in perfection, without the least failure, Psal. ciii. 21. But which of the commandments do we not break on earth? what part of God's will is done by us in every point as is required? None at all. But the saints hope and long for the day, when they shall be able to know and do the whole of it in every point.

(4.) To do it humbly. When the angels have wings to fly on God's errands, yet they have also wings to cover their face and their feet, Isa. vi. 2. There is no raising of pride in their hearts upon the doing of their duty, nor to keep them from any duty. But how does pride of heart keep us back from many duties as too low for us! and how often does it arise upon the doing any thing well; 2 Cor. xii. 7. This is a heavy piece of the body of death, which the saints long to be rid of.

(5.) To do it cheerfully, Psal. ciii. 20. So the angels do in heaven. It is no burden to them to do his will; there is no heavy driving in the course of their obedience. This also is our duty, Psal. c. 2. But, ah! how often are our hearts to be dragged to duty! what backwardness to the doing of God's will, like the cutting off of a right hand! How desirable is it to a holy heart to be able to obey cheerfully!

(6.) To do it readily, without delay. So the angels are represented with wings, to shew their readiness and speed in obeying their Lord. So should we, Psal. cxix. 60. 'I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.' But, alas! how far from it are the best many times! God speaks once, yea, twice, but we perceive it not. How often are we ruined with delays, and our work is marred in our hand! It is the desire of all the godly to be rid of this indisposition.

(7.) *Lastly*, To do it constantly. So the heavenly bodies do it without intermission, without interruption: and so do the angels. So the saints desire to do, Psal. cxix. 112. 'I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end.' But, alas! how fickle and inconstant are



they now, through a lightness of heart, which is heavy, heavy to every gracious soul?

SECONDLY, I shall shew, what is the import of this petition with reference to the will of God's providence. It imports,

*First*, A confession, (1.) Of a natural aptness in all men to quarrel, repine, and murmur against the methods and disposals of Providence, Numb. xiv. 2. No king's management is so freely canvassed and censured by the subjects, as the King of heaven's management in this world is by the hearts of men. An all-wise Providence guides the world, in every particular; but where is the man that has not some quarrel or other with it?

[1.] Kind providences towards others are grudged, Mat. xx. 15. Though God is the Sovereign Lord of all, and all things are his own, and he is debtor to none, men are prone to quarrel the disposal of his benefits, as if they would teach him on whom to bestow his favours.

[2.] Afflictive providences towards one's self are quarrelled. The foolish heart speaks as one of the foolish women, Job ii. 10. Though the worst we meet with in the world is short of our deservings, yet how does the heart rise against the smallest evils laid upon us! When the yoke of affliction is wreathed about one's neck, the unsubdued heart rages under it, like a wild bull in a net.

(2.) Of a natural backwardness to fall in with the designs of providence of one sort or other. God teaches by kind providences, and afflictive ones too. But such is the perverseness of human nature, that it scorns to be led by the one, Rom. ii. 4. or to be driven with the other, Jer. v. 3. Whether God write men's duty in white or black lines of providence, the heart is disposed not to fall in with it, Matth. xi. 16, 17.

*Secondly*, A profession, (1.) Of the saints sorrow for this disposition of heart crossing the will of God. It is a burden to them, and the renewed nature hereby enters a dissent against this quarrelling of the corrupt nature against the will of God, Jer. xxxi. 18. They condemn themselves for not submitting cheerfully to, and falling in readily with the divine will in all things. It is one of the greatest struggles which a child of God has, to get his will conformed to the will of God.

(2.) Of the faith of the power of grace to subdue the will

to this conformity. So they hereby put their stony refractory heart into the heart-changing hand to melt it down, and make it pliable, Jer. xxxi. 18. forecited. And it is the comfort of all the saints, that there is a remedy of sufficient grace in Jesus Christ, for the removing of the natural perverseness of their wills.

*Thirdly*, A desire of grace for a thorough compliance with the will of God's providence. Which extends to,

1. A submission to the will of God in afflicting providences. This is our duty, whatever be our trial, Psal. xxxix. 9. 'I was dumb,' says David, 'I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.' But it is a difficult duty, because of that corrupt self-love which cries for ease, and so much prevails in all men; because of that blindness of men's minds, whereby they take that which is really for their good to be for evil to them, and because we are all so much wedded to our own will. Therefore the saints desire the removal of these impediments by God's grace, and the subduing of their hearts to a submission.

2. A thankful acceptance of merciful and kind providences, Luke i. 38. This is our duty also; but it is the natural bias of our hearts to sacrifice to our own net, and to forget and overlook God's goodness in these; to sit down to the covered table of kind providence, not looking up with due acknowledgments to him who has provided it. So it is the saints desire to have grace to enable them to receive thankfully.

3. A compliance with the design of providences of all sorts. We must act according to the will of providence, Acts xiii. 36. and we have need of grace for it. When God by his providence puts work in our hands, and gives us abilities and occasions to serve him, we are obliged to employ all for his service, else we answer not the design. Mercies and rods have a call. And every one is by providence put in some particular station, with some talents, less or more, for the duties of that station. He does the will of God's providence, that employs his interest, gifts, and abilities in his calling, moving in his own sphere prudently, constantly, and vigorously, as those in heaven do.

*Fourthly*, A consent to the will of God, a yielding of the heart to that it may be done. Our Lord gave us a copy of this resignation to the will of God in his bitter sufferings,

Matth. xxvi. 42. 'O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.' And the church in Paul's case wrote after this copy, Acts xxi. 14. saying, 'The will of the Lord be done.' And whatever befalls the church, ourselves, or others, by the will of providence, there ought to be a humble resignation to the will of God in it all.

IV. I shall give the reasons why the saints have such a concern that the will of God may be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

1. Because it is most just, holy, reasonable, and equitable, in all things, and they see it so, Psal. cxix. 128. 'I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right.' Psal. cxlv. 17. 'The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.' God is holy and just in his own nature, and can command, demand, or inflict nothing that is unjust. He can do no wrong to the creature, nor can he bid the creature to do any thing wrong. He is infinitely wise, and knows how to guide the world best. What wonder, then, they be concerned his will be done, since it is the best that can be done?

2. Because the glory of God, which of all things is dearest to the saints, is deeply interested in this matter, God is perfectly glorified in heaven, because there his will is done perfectly: but he is dishonoured on earth, because his will is not obeyed and submitted to there. It is by this that his Spirit is vexed, his will being crossed and contradicted by vile worms.

3. Because this would make a heaven on earth. If there was such a harmony betwixt earth and heaven, that God's will were done in the one, as in the other, it would make on earth,

(1.) A heaven for beauty and order of all things. There is a comely order in heaven, because all there keep their own place, and follow the will of the Creator in all things. But sin has filled the earth with confusion and disorder, which will never be rectified till those on earth return to move according to rule, viz. the will of the creature. What would become of us, if the sun and moon were as irregular in their motions as we are?

(2.) A heaven for happiness. The happiness of men lies



in their assimilation to God ; and they are so far like him as they conform to his will. Were our will perfectly conformed to the will of God, we could never be miserable ; for if God's will were our will, nothing could befall us against our will ; we would be pleased with all that we meet with.

USE. Are we directed thus to pray ? Then,

1. We ought to be very careful to know what is the will of God in the several passages of our life, Eph. v. 10. Lest we mistake his will, or overlook it, we should study his word, that we may do it ; and study his works, that we may comply with the call of them. For we can never be doers of the will of God, if we know it not. It is impossible that an ignorant person can do the will of God ; and therefore it behoves us, if we would do his will, carefully to search the scriptures, and narrowly consider the works of God.

2. Let us be careful to do the will of God's commands, in such sort as we may most nearly resemble those in heaven, doing it evenly, unweariedly, universally, humbly, cheerfully, readily, and constantly, as you heard the saints desire to do. And let us never forget to comply with this great commandment, of believing in the name of Jesus Christ ; for if this be not done in the first place, we cannot possibly do the will of God in any other thing. Faith is the foundation of all acceptable obedience to the will of God, leads to it, and animates the soul therein. For motives, consider,

*Mot.* (1.) We are under the greatest obligations to the doing of the will of God. God is our Creator, our Sovereign Lord and Ruler, and therefore has a just title to our obedience. The Creator's authority, and the Redeemer's love and grace, so amply displayed in the work of our redemption, loudly call for our obeying the will of God. The law is given us as the matter and rule of our obedience ; and we are redeemed by Christ, that we may be holy, and comply with the whole will of God revealed to us.

(2.) It is only the doers of his will that shall get to heaven, Matth. vii. 21. There is a reward of grace to be reaped afterwards for it. ' In keeping of the divine commandments,' says the Psalmist, ' there is great reward.' None are fit or qualified for the work and employment of heaven but holy persons, and none can be holy without doing the whole will of God. Obedience to his will is an infallible

evidence of holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

(3.) Since his will is manifested to us in his word and works, the neglect of it will lay us open to double stripes, Luke xii. 47. Since God has been pleased to write to us the great things of his law, and to reveal his will respecting both matters of faith and practice, we can have no pretence for ignorance, nor room to plead that we know not what is our duty. All pleas of ignorance are as inexcusable as those of neglect, which shall be rejected at the great day, and all neglecters of the will of God punished with everlasting destruction.

3. *Lastly*, Let us be careful to comply with the will of Divine Providence. And,

(1.) Let us consider what the dispensations of the day towards the church, and towards ourselves, do call for, and comply therewith. While the Lord's hand is stretched out, and he threatens to take away his peace from us, [1.] Let us examine ourselves, smiting on our breasts, and saying, What have I done to kindle the fire of the Lord's anger? [2.] Let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and have a deep concern for the preservation of truth and peace; that the Lord may support his own cause, bless the gospel for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of all who have given their names to Christ.

(2.) Let us be submissive under all afflicting providences, laying our hands on our mouths, accepting the punishment of our sins, and justifying God in whatever we meet with.

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#### THE FOURTH PETITION.

MATTH. vi. 11.—*Give us this day our daily bread.*

**T**HE former three petitions respect God's glory; and the latter three our own welfare. In the first three we are directed to pray for the advancement of his name, kingdom, and will, and in the last three for our own temporal and spiritual good. The order is divine, and teaches us this

DOCTR. 'That it is the duty of all, and the disposition of God's children, to prefer God's honour to all their personal and private interests.' It is preferable,

1. To our own temporal welfare: *Thy name be hallowed, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done*; and then, *Give us this day our daily bread*. It speaks the disposition of God's children in three things.

(1.) They desire that God's glory may be advanced, whatever come of their bread or provision for this life. Their life itself is by them put in subordination to God's honour, much more the outward comforts of it, Acts xxi. 13. If the chariot of God's honour cannot drive forward, but it must drive over their table, they bid it welcome to drive on, though it cast down their table, making its way over it, Luke xiv. 26.

(2.) They desire not bread in a way inconsistent with the glory of God's name, the coming of his kingdom, and doing his will, Heb. xi. 25. If they cannot have it, but out of the ruins of these, they will rather want it: it is too dear bought at the expence of the profanation of his name, wronging and marring the progress of his kingdom, and going over his declared will.

(3.) In pursuing the honour of his name, the advancing of his kingdom, and doing of his will, they will cast themselves on their Father for their bread, in confidence that he will furnish them with what they need of it for those great ends, 1 Cor. ix. 7. 'Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?' They have his promise for it, Psal. xxxvii. 3. 'Verily thou shalt be fed.' And he will be as good as his word: it is a ruled case, Luke xxii. 35. 'When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, wanted ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.'

2. To our own spiritual welfare: *Thy name, &c. Thy kingdom, &c. Thy will, &c.* Then, *Forgive us our debts, &c.* It speaks the disposition of the saints in submitting even their spiritual comforts and ease unto the glory of their Father. An eminent instance of this we have in David, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. 'And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it,



and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee: behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.' And we have another eminent instance of it in David's Lord, Psal. xxii. 1, 2, 3. 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.' To this holy sovereignty Mary was required to stoop, and she did it, John xx. 17. 'Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not: for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.' And why should not all the children of God submit the whole of their spiritual comforts, and the way of their travelling through the wilderness unto their heavenly Father, that he may dispose of it to his own glory, and according to his will? I make no question, but men are to submit their eternal salvation to the honour of God; but as soon as one is brought into God's family, that is secured, and put beyond a possibility of losing.

The reason of this point is, that God is man's chief end, and the chief good. All things are from him, and so must be for him, Prov. xvi. 4. Rev. iv. ult. And to alter this order, is for men to make God's honour the means, and their own welfare the end; which is to lift up themselves very proudly above God.

USE 1. This speaks death to those who make the interest of God's name, kingdom, and will, lacquey at the foot of their personal private interests; and who cut and carve in their religion, as may be most subservient to advance their own interest, Phil. ii. 21. They will drive over God's honour, conscience, justice, and equity, to compass their own ends, and sacrifice all that is sacred to their own worldly interest.

2. It speaks comfort to those who first seek the kingdom of God in the habitual conduct of their lives, Matth. vi. 33. These seek in the order prescribed, and so cannot miss to come speed. Heaven is a top with them, and earth under their feet. They consent to the cutting and carving of their own lot, as may be most subservient to God's honour. They look mainly to God's honour, and God will see well to their welfare.

In the text God is represented as the universal Benefactor, Maintainer, and Supporter of all, out of whose hands every one must receive his portion; and to whom Christ sends rich and poor, to beg their bread of him. And here see,

1. What we are to seek of him, for our bodies, *bread*, i. e. all the means of life, necessities and conveniences; for a man may be killed with thirst, and starved with cold, though he had abundance of other things, if he want things necessary in these cases.

2. What bread, *daily bread*, i. e. a competent portion of the good things of this life; God as the great Steward giving to all their portion meet for them, as a master or Steward of a family gives to every member his stated allowance.

3. What sort of daily bread, *our own*; such as we lawfully come by; for what is unlawfully gotten, and we have no right to by God's gift, Satan puts it in men's hands, not God.

4. When we are to seek it, *this day*, i. e. every day. God keeps all men hanging on him for every day's provision. In respect of God, those who have the greatest fulness live from hand to mouth; and they are indebted to God for every day's mercies as well as the poor.

5. How we are to seek it, *Give us*, i. e. by way of free gift. We cannot plead the merit of a crumb; but grounding our plea on mercy through Christ, we may seek all we need.

6. *Lastly*, For whom we are to seek, *us*, i. e. for ourselves and others; for we are one needy company, and must be all furnished from the same hand.

Before I proceed to a particular consideration of this petition, I shall observe this point of doctrine from it, viz.

DOCT. 'Men depend wholly and entirely on God's bounty, for all the means and comforts of life.' There are some who are quite broken, have nothing left them, and can do nothing for a livelihood: how do they live? they hang on about their friends hands, and they have nothing but what they give them. That is the case of all men with respect to God, the best friend of the creatures; and have what ye will, ye know not your own state, if ye know not that ye thus depend on him.

To confirm this point, consider,

1. God is the Creator of all things. He made us and all things, and particularly those which contribute to the support and comfort of our lives, Psal. c. 3. What a precious thing is the life of man, for which so many hands are set on work to maintain it? They that have a great family to maintain, will have several hands employed in several pieces of work, and all to provide for them. All mankind depend on God; his family of nature is a vast one: and he has made the hands to be employed in it accordingly. He made the corn, and the beasts of the earth, for this end; the earth itself to produce the one, and feed the other; and the heavens, with the glorious bodies therein, to influence the earth for that effect. For this cause the sun, that great servant of the world, is constantly going about, making day and night, seed-time and harvest, &c. and all for the support of the family.

2. He preserves them all in their being, Heb. i. 3. The whole frame of the universe, and all the creatures in it, are upheld by him, as a ball in the air: which would presently fall down, if he should withdraw his supporting hand. The being of the creatures is in a continual flux; there is no necessary connection betwixt their being one moment and another; so that if God should withdraw his hand, they would immediately dwindle into nothing. Our food would all vanish, the beasts disappear, the whole globe of the earth go like ashes in the wind, and the sun go out like a candle burnt to snuff, without his supporting influence.

3. He is the Proprietor of us, and of all the creatures that we have the benefit of, in heaven or earth. He has given you the use of them, but the property remains with him: he is the true Owner and Lord of all. Have you got the corn into your barns or barn-yards to feed you, and the wool to clothe you? remember, God says, it is 'my corn and my wool,' Hos. ii. 9. Have you the hills plenished with your store? remember, God's mark is upon them all, small and great, Psal. l. 10. As it is his earth that bears us, and his air that we breathe, so it is his food that maintains us, and his raiment that clothes us.

4. All things that have life are maintained on his charges, man not excepted, Psal. cxlv. 15, 16. 'The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.' He makes grass to grow for the cattle,



and feeds the young ravens that cry. The same heavenly Father whom we seek our daily bread from, feeds the fowls of the air, Matth. vi. 26. If God should close his hand upon the creatures that wait on him for their food, where would man's comforts be, that are drawn from them, for the support of his body.

5. All the usefulness and comfort of the creatures to us depends on God. Matt. xix. 17. Whatsoever good is in them is dropt into them from the fountain of goodness. The creature is a mere empty nothing in itself, and is foisonless without the blessing from the Lord, Matth. iv. 4. No creature can be more to another than God makes it to be, Hos. ii. 21, 22: The corn cannot hear Jezreel, nor the earth the corn, nor the heavens the earth, unless God hear first; and then the heavens will hear the earth, the earth the corn, and the corn Jezreel.

6. Wherefore God has a negative on all the creatures, Should they all say, Yea, if he say No, nothing can be done, Lam. iii. 37. He is the spring that sets all the wheels of the creation a-going. Should he stop, and deny his influence, then all of them are motionless that moment. Thou hast bread; but what will it avail thee without his blessing? if he withdraw it, thou mayst eat, and not be satisfied, Hos. iv. 10. Thy clothes could not warm thee without it. Ye might plough and sow, and get nothing for your pains, if he but lay his charge on the earth to deny her fruits. Ye might tend your cattle and flocks and do your best for them, and all to no purpose, if he keep back his own, Psal. xcv. 4. which he cannot crave as a debt. Ye might rise early, and sit up late, and ply your business with the utmost diligence; but when thou hast done all thou canst do by art or industry, remember what Moses says to the Israelites, Deut. viii. 17, 18. 'Thou say in thine heart, My power, and the might of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.' And consider what the Lord says, Psal. cxxvii. 1, 2. 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.'

7. *Lastly*, Our comforts and supports of life are never out

of God's reach. If they were in ever such a flourishing condition, he can blast them to us in a moment. One day saw Job exceeding rich and poor to a proverb, Job. i. 13. &c. having seven thousand sheep in the morning, and not a living one among them all at night. How often has it been, that a fair braird has brought little into the barn-yard? When it has been ready for the hook, or cut down in the field, shaking winds and rotting rains have made it little worth, Hos. ii. 9. When it is brought to the barn-floor, even then we are not sure of it, Hos. ix. 2. 'The floor and the wine-press shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her.' When the corn is made in bread, 'the Lord can take away the whole stay of bread, Isa. iii. 1. When it goes down the throat he can make it choke us, and when it is in the belly, he can 'turn it,' and make 'it the gall of asps within us,' Job. xx. 14.

I proceed to the petition itself, in which we pray, 'That, of God's free gift, we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them.'

In discoursing from this petition, I shall shew,

I. What is meant by *bread* in it.

II. What is the import of this petition for *bread*.

III. Apply.

I. I am to shew what is meant by *bread* in this petition. Not the spiritual bread, which is Jesus Christ; that we pray for in the second petition. Not the sacramental bread neither; that is prayed for in the fifth petition, being a seal of the pardon of sin. But, as I have already observed, bread for the sustenance of our bodies, bread for our own tables, for nourishing the clay bodies in their present earthly state. So this petition concerns our bodies. Hence,

Observe, That we are allowed to be concerned for our bodies, and their sustenance. The neglect of it is a sin against God, Col. ii. ult. And the care of it is necessary to fit us for serving God in our several stations, as the horse must be seen to by him who would make out his journey. And if we be the Lord's children, our bodies are the Lord's by a peculiar title; they are the members of Christ, and temples

of his Spirit. And therefore we owe them a particular honour and regard.

Yet there is but one petition here for the body, while there are two for the soul, 'Forgive us our debts,' &c. 'And lead us not into temptation,' &c. Whence,

*Observe,* Our main concern should be for our souls; and so it is indeed with the saints. This is that better part of the man, which is worthy of double honour, double care and concern, Matth. xvi. 26.

1. The body is of the earth, the soul is from heaven. By the body we are allied to the beasts, but by our souls to the angels. The one is the brutal part of the man, the other the angelical part. And as heaven is above the earth, so should the care of our souls be beyond that of our bodies.

2. Our bodies are mortal, but our souls immortal. When one dies, his body goes to sleep in the dust till the resurrection; but his soul goes to God who gave it, to live either in heaven or hell. Shall we not then have a greater concern for the immortal inhabitant, than the clay cottage, the weak tabernacle in which it dwells?

3. Caring chiefly for the soul, we secure the happiness of the body too, in this life, Matth. vi. 33. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you;' and also in the life to come, Rom. viii. 11. 'But if the Spirit of him, that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.' But caring chiefly for the body, we lose the soul and the body too, Matth. x. 39. 'He that findeth his life shall lose it.' And there is no compensating of this loss.

*USE.* How far are the most part of men from this duly divided concern! Alas! does not the body get the double portion of desires, cares, and concern; and is not the soul admitted only to the least part? For the quantity it gets more, and for the quality too; we being vigorous and lively in our concerns for the body, but careless and indifferent in those for the soul: which is the very reverse of the frame which grace puts the heart into.

Under the name of *bread* here is comprehended not only



bread strictly so called, but generally the good things of this life for the support of our bodies.

1. Necessaries, without which life cannot be sustained, viz. food and raiment, For, as I formerly noticed, a man may be killed with thirst, and starved by cold, though he had plenty of other things, 2 Tim. vi. 8. Thus the scripture uses the word *bread*, Eccl. xi. 1. ‘Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.’

2. Conveniences, which one cannot live comfortably without, Prov. xxx. 8. ‘Feed me with food convenient for me.’ God does not pen up his people to what is absolutely necessary for keeping in their life, but allows them for conveniency and delight, both as to desire and use. This varies according to the several stations in which men are placed in the world, that being abundance to one which would quite hamper another. And so in this men are allowed to beg of God, such a portion of the good things of this life, as is agreeable to the condition which he has placed them in.

Now, all necessities and conveniences of life are comprehended under bread: (1.) Because bread is, generally speaking, the most necessary support of life. (2.) The most common and ordinary, the entertainment of the poor and of the rich, and what by a special providence so ordering it, men are least apt to loath.

II. I proceed to shew what is the import of this petition for *bread*. That I may the more distinctly handle this, I shall consider it in the several parts thereof, by shewing the import of the words, *Give bread*, *Give us bread*, *Give us our bread*, and *Give us our daily bread*.

*First*, I shall show what is the import of these words, *Give bread*. Our Lord teaches all his people to come unto God, and say, *Our Father—give us bread*. It imports,

1. That we are allowed to lay our temporal concerns and wants before the Lord in prayer, as well as our spiritual concerns, Prov. iii. 6. ‘In all thy ways acknowledge him.’ The praying Christian is a trader with heaven, and he may trade there in small things as well as in great things; nay, he ought to do it. For the covenant comprehends the small things of this life, the bread and the water, Isa. xxxiii. 16. discretion in managing of his affairs, Psal. cxii. 5; and the success of his management, Psal. i. 3; as well as the great things of eternal salvation, 1 Tim. iv. 8. And much of God

may be seen in answers of prayers of that kind. Gen. xxxiii. 10.

2. That men depend entirely on heaven for the means and comforts of life. Our country in this world is nourished by the King's country : and if the communication betwixt them were stopt, we would all starve, Hos. ii. 21, 22. He is the Creator, Preserver, and Proprietor of all the creatures, and their Provisor. There are some who, having nothing of their own, do live by hanging on about the hands of their friends. And that is the case of all men with respect to God, the great Friend of the creatures.

3. That we need bread. While we are in this world, we will need it. The clay tabernacle in its present state, like an old ratched house is still needing reparation : but in a little time we will need no more. Death puts an end to all these needs ; and after the resurrection our bodies will be supported without these things which are now necessary.

4. That it is God who giveth us bread. The necessities and conveniences of life are distributed by his hand, Psal. cxlv. 16. Though you get your bread by your labour, you have it from God ; for it is God that gives success to your labours. Though others give it you of their own, it is from God ; for it is he that opens their hearts to bestow it on you, Deut. viii. 17, 18. Neither your industry nor interest can procure it without him.

*Lastly,* That our bread is God's free gift of mercy, without any merit of ours, Gen. xxxii. 10. The least rag for our clothing, crumb for our food, breathing in God's air, &c. is what we deserve not at the hand of God, Luke xvii. 10. In Adam we forfeited our right to God's creatures, Gen. ii. 17 ; and by that sin of breaking the first covenant, and many other rebellions against the Sovereign God, we have deserved to be stript of all our comforts : So that all that we get is God's free undeserved gift.

*Quest.* What needs one pray for bread, when he has it already ? He that has it in his house, yea, upon his table, has good reason to pray for it ; because,

1. Without the efficacy of the divine appointment, it cannot be bread to us, it cannot nourish us, Matth. iv. 4. Without that our bread will not strengthen us, more than ashes, if God break the stay and staff of it, Isa. iii. 1.

2. Without God's good-will and favour with it, there is

a curse in it, Mal. ii. 2. And cursed bread makes but a sad meal.

*Secondly*, What is the import of these words, *Give us bread*? It imports,

1. That we may and ought to look to the Lord, not only for our own provision, but for the provision of our families, 1 Pet. v. 7. He that has laid it on masters of families to provide for their families, will make them welcome to pray for their provision. They who have had nothing to provide them with, have got them provided this way: and those who have had enough for them, little or nothing of it has come to their hand, when God has seen it meet to make it so.

2. That we should be concerned for others also, that they may have bread as well as we. Good men are merciful men, and will give to others that need, and much more wish them well, Jam. ii. 15, 16. We are all of one common nature, which requires this sympathy; and it well becomes those who are full to remember those who are hungry.

*Thirdly*, What is the import of these words, *Give us our bread*? There are three things imported in it, as desired by us.

1. That whatever portion of the good things of this life be bestowed on us, we may have a right to them, and so may look on them as our own bread.

(1.) A covenant-right to them, through Jesus Christ, by whom the lost right to the creatures is restored to believers, 1 Cor. iii. 22. For if one be in Christ, he enjoys his bread by a new tenor, the tenor of the covenant, Isa. xxxiii. 16: And that makes dry bread sweet.

(2.) A civil right to them, that it be such bread as we come lawfully by; that it be our own, not another's coming to us in an unjust way, 2 Thess. iii. 12. One had better want, than be sustained on the gain of injustice; for upon that one can never expect God's blessing.

(3.) That God would bless our lawful endeavours for bread. That is a promise of the covenant; and what God has promised we may pray for, Psal. cxxviii. 2. 'Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands.' One must not think to get his bread by praying for it, with folded hands, Prov. x. 4. 'He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand.' Nor is working for it without prayer to God, the way to ob-



tain it, Hag. i. 6, 9. But God's blessing and man's industry must go hand in hand towards it.

3. That our bread thus brought to our hands may be blessed of God to us, 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5. As an ingenuous child loves rather to take his bread out of his father's hand, than to take it to himself; so the bread which is ours, as aforesaid, the children of God do by prayer put again into God's hand, that they may receive it out of his hand again with his blessing. Lord, do thou give us our bread.

*Fourthly*, What is the import of praying for *daily bread*? It imports,

1. That we are to confine our desires of the good things of this life to a competency, and not extend them to wealth and riches, Prov. xxx. 8. 'Give me neither poverty, nor riches.' We are to pray for daily, not weekly and yearly bread. Riches are a snare to our corrupt hearts, Matth. xix. 23. and they who are anxious for them, court their own harm, 1 Tim. vii. 9. If God lay them to your hand, as he has done to some of his own, ye are to be thankful for them; but beware the heart go not out after them, but use them for the honour and service of God.

2. That we are to be content to live from hand to mouth, having daily bread, without anxiety for the time to come, Matth. vi. 34. Surely we have enough, if God provide for every day as it comes.

*Fifthly*, What is the import of praying, *Give us this day our daily bread*? It is not, Give us to-morrow our daily bread. It teaches us,

1. That we are not to be anxious about to-morrow's provision, Matth. vi. 34.

2. That God will have us every day coming to him for the supply of our needs. He likes to have his people about his hand; and therefore never furnishes them so one day, but they need to come again another day.

3. That we are not sure of to-morrow. Every day may be our last. 'For what is our life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away,' Jam. iv. 14. We may die this day, and need no more. So that there is no occasion for praying for any more than provision suitable to the day when it comes.

I conclude this subject with a few inferences.

*Inf.* 1. Let us be thankful to God for what we enjoy of

the good things of this life. We owe it all to him ; and therefore let us take all we have as out of his hand, whatever we do for it ; for it is at his charges we live. Let us then be thankful to God, and own ourselves debtors to him, for all our mercies ; for he it is that giveth rain and fruitful seasons. That there is food for man and beast among us, is the effect of his free bounty. And it is owing to the same cause that we have peace to enjoy the fruit of our labours, and that God has not put it in the hands of enemies to eat it up. Let us admire his bounty to a sinful generation ; and see and notice with wonder, how he does good to the unthankful and unholy, and how strictly he observes his promises, Gen. viii. ult. ‘ While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.’ That year the general deluge happened, there was no seed-time, nor harvest ; but since they have never failed.

2. Let us look to God, and depend by faith on him for future mercies ; and particularly look to him, for his blessing on the winter and spring season, on which so much depends with us. Whatever strait he may be pleased to bring, let us accept it humbly off his hand, since he owes us nothing, and may do with his own what he will. Look to him for removing of it, and patiently wait his time. Pray for his blessing on your substance, and on the work of your hands. You see the petition is put in your mouths for it every day. And therefore being offered through Christ, it will be accepted.

3. Let us be content with the measure he sees meet for us. Though others may have more than we, we have more than we can crave as debt ? and it becomes us not to pretend to teach the ruler of the world, to whom he should give more, and to whom less, Matth. xx. 15.

4. Let us make God our friend through the mediation of his Son, Acts xii. 20. Repent, and turn from your sins ; and reform yourselves and families. Sin is the only makebate betwixt God and us : put that away, since ye depend entirely on him for all you have. It is a strange thing to be provoking him, and grieving his Spirit, by a course of sin, on whom we depend for all things.

5. Beware of abusing God’s good creatures to gluttony, drunkenness, sensuality, and luxury. Be not like the horse

that kicks against him that feeds him: and fight not against the Lord with the benefits he puts in your hands. Many to whom the Lord has given plenty of worldly good things, look on themselves as entitled to a greater liberty than others: but know that the more ye have, ye are the more in God's debt; and as your receipts are more than others, your reckoning will be deeper.

6. Let us serve God joyfully with what he gives us. Let not men take God's gifts, and bestow them on their lusts, as those who use their worldly good things to the dishonour of the name of God, and the feeding of their pride, sensuality, and other brutal passions. Sobriety becomes us; and as our Lord has stinted us to ask no more than a day's provision, let us use what he gives for every day soberly, with thankfulness; and improve it to his honour, in doing his will.

7. Let us not be anxious about provision for this life, nor go out of the road of duty or righteousness to get it. For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; and they that keep his way, he will see to their provision. Let us be diligent in our several callings to maintain ourselves in an honest way, without anxious solicitude and carking cares about the event; but leave the success to God, taking thankfully whatever he sends, and craving his blessing upon it.

8. *Lastly*, Let us from the same God, through Jesus Christ, look for eternal life, and the means leading thereto. Be concerned for your souls, and for the bread of life to them. Little bread will serve us till we will need no more. Many of us have eaten most of our bread already, and less may serve us than we are aware of. Our souls must have food too, and live for ever; therefore be especially concerned for them.



## THE FIFTH PETITION.

MATTH. vi. 12.—*And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*

**T**HIS petition concerns our souls, as the former did our bodies, and relates to the pardon of sin, which we are here taught to pray for.

In discoursing from this subject, I shall consider,

- I. The order of this petition, and the connection of it.
- II. The petition itself.
- III. Deduce some inferences.

I. I shall consider the order of this petition, and the connection of it. Concerning the order of it, two things may be observed.

1. That it follows the petition for daily bread. Not that bread is comparable, far less preferable to pardon; but that the time of this life is the season of pardon, Heb. ix. 27. Now or never we must be pardoned. When we have no more ado with bread, death taking away the necessity of it, we have no more ado with pardon.

2. That is the first of the petitions for spiritual blessings. Because pardon of sin is a leading benefit, and while sin remains unpardoned, the communication betwixt God and the sinner is stopped, Amos. iii. 2. ‘Can two walk together, except they be agreed?’ While God has a controversy with the sinner, he pursues it in greater or lesser measure, Psal. lxvi. 18. And the removal of guilt is the opening of the spring of spiritual blessings, to run abundantly; it is the taking the stone off the mouth of the well.

As to the connection, this petition is knit to the former by the particle ‘*and*, Give us this day,’ &c. ‘And forgive us,’ &c. which speaks this, that, in giving of bread without forgiving of sin, there is death in the pot, Psal. iv. 6, & xvii. 14. There can be little sap or sweet in the bread of the condemned, though, alas! many eat it cheerfully,

Like the rich man, Luke xii. they eat, they drink joyfully, while the sword of Justice hangs over their head by a hair. It is because they see it not. The looks of an angry Judge, the frowns of a Father, in giving the bread to us, will make it very sapless, to those who discern them. A pardon is the best seasoning to any meal, Eccl. ix. 7. Compare Acts ii. 37, 46.

II. Let us consider the petition itself, wherein we pray, 'That God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because by his grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others.' In which we may speak of two things.

1. The thing petitioned.
2. The argument backing it.

FIRST, Let us consider the petition itself, *Forgive us our debts*. This is the petition, strictly speaking. Upon which I am to enquire,

1. What is meant by *debts*.
2. What is meant by *our debts*.
3. Who are meant by *us*.
4. What is meant by *forgiveness*.
5. What is the import of this petition.

*First*, What is meant by *debts*? Sins are the debts here prayed to be forgiven, Luke xi. 4. the worst debts in the world.

1. Why is sin called a debt? Not because it is a non-payment of God's dues, a non-performance of duty, as some say; these things answer not the notion of debt: far less because we owe it to God. But sin is called debt, because it is a taking away from God something for which we owe him an equivalent, an as-good, Psal. lxi. 4. 'Then I restored that which I took not away.' This notion is the common notion of debts. Sin is a robbing God of his honour, and an owing him a reparation.

So in sin as a debt four things are to be considered. (1.) The debtor which is the sinner. Every sinner is a debtor, owing more than he is able to pay. (2.) The creditor is God, at whose mercy the sinner lies. (3.) The valuable thing which the sinner has got away from God for his own use, or rather abuse, is God's honour. (4.) The as-good

which the sinner owes on that account to God, is the reparation of God's honour.

2. What sort of a debt is sin?

(1.) It is a drowning debt, a debt so great as no mortal is able to pay, Matth. xviii. 24, 25. And all mankind had died in it, if a cautioner able to pay it had not been found, Psal. lxxxix. 19.

(2.) It is a disheartening debt for the presence of God. As an insolvent debtor has no will to come in his creditor's sight; so the sinner has no will to come into God's sight till he be brought, Matth. xviii. 24. This is the reason why many otherwise jovial and merry, when they come into God's presence in duties, are quite heartless.

(3.) It is a debt that the sinner is very ready to count down, Luke xvi. 6. As he is unable to pay, so naturally he is unwilling to confess it, and make fair count.

(4.) It is a debt that in the end will be fairly and exactly stated, and not the least article forgotten or miscounted. The creditor has given his oath upon it, Amos viii. 7. 'The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely, I will never forget any of their works.' And the debtor; nill he will he, shall be convinced of the justness of the accounts.

(5.) It is a debt that must be paid one way or other. The debtor has but three choices, Pay, Find a cautioner, or Go to prison, Matth. v. 25. None can pay, few will employ the cautioner, therefore must go to prison.

(6.) It is a growing debt. While it is not taken course with, the interest runs on, and the great sum to-day becomes greater to-morrow, Rom. ii. 5.

*Lastly*, When it is pursued, it is pursued on the debtor's expence. The pursuit is at the sinner's cost, and he is made to bear the weight of it.

*Secondly*, What is meant by *our* debts, or sins? All sins which we are any manner of way chargeable with, and accountable for, before the Lord. Now sin becomes ours four ways.

1. By imputation. So Adam's sin is our sin, Rom. v. 19. and therefore must be pardoned to us otherwise we will be ruined by it, as the heir is ruined by his father's debt.

2. By inhesion in us. So the sin of our nature conveyed to us from Adam, consisting in a bent to evil, and backwardness to good, is our sin as subjected in us, Psal. li. 5. This



will ruin us also, if it be not forgiven as to the guilt of it : for ' the wages of sin is death,' Rom. vi. 23.

3. By personal omission or commission, Jer. xvi. 10. Thus all our omission of duties, and commission of sins, are our sins which we absolutely need to be forgiven, as treason personally done by us against the King of heaven.

4. By accession any manner of way, to the sins of others, 1 Tim. v. 22. Thus other men's sins, which we become accessory to by commanding, counselling, approving, and the like, become our sins, and involve us in guilt, which we need to be forgiven.

*Thirdly*, Who are meant by *us*, for whom forgiveness is asked?

1. Ourselves : for every man is, in the first place, to be concerned for his own pardon. Yet not ourselves only,

2. But others also ; not only those who are already of God's family, but all sorts of men living, 1 Tim. ii. 1 ; those only excepted who have sinned the sin unto death, 1 John v. 16. The saints are daily orators at the throne of grace, for the rest of the world, and are concerned for pardon to those who are not concerned for it to themselves. Thus our Lord cast the copy, Luke xxiii. 34. ' Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' And Stephen the first martyr followed it, Acts vii. 60. ' Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.'

*Fourthly*, What is meant by forgiveness or pardon ? It is the removal of guilt, which is an obligation to punishment. Guilt is twofold ; the guilt of eternal wrath, and the guilt of temporary fatherly anger. Guilt is removed two ways, formally, and declaratively. Pardon is threefold.

1. Pardon of the guilt of eternal wrath. Thus every soul, upon its first closing with Jesus Christ in the gospel, is pardoned, Rom. v. 1. The condemning sentence of the law, binding them over to vindictive justice, to go to the prison of hell, and lie there till they have paid the utmost farthing of their own debt, is removed, Rom. viii. 1. ' There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.'

2. Pardon of the guilt of temporary strokes and fatherly anger, 2 Kings xxiv. 4. The law of grace says, ' If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments ; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments :

then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail,' Psal. lxxxix. 30,—33. So the children of God, who are beyond the reach of eternal wrath, are oft-times liable to temporary fatherly wrath, which they need a pardon for, as the child needs the father's pardon. And upon their fresh application to the Lord Jesus Christ they obtain it.

3. A declarative pardon, which is the pardon manifested to the soul, a sense of pardon, Luke vii. 47, 48. 'Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, thy sins are forgiven.' She was a pardoned sinner before, for that is evident from her love to Christ; but now the pardon is intimated to her. The debt is not only forgiven, but the debtor gets the discharge of it.

This threefold pardon is here meant, and each of them is given for Christ's sake, and we obtain them by faith apprehending his obedience and death, Eph. i. 6, 7. Therefore the sea of glass is represented as betwixt the throne and the elders, Rev. iv. 6. See Zech. xiii. 1.

*Fifthly*, Let us consider the import of this petition. This we take up in these three things.

1. A confessing of debt. The saints own themselves and all others God's debtors, Dan. ix. 5. 'We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments.' They will not deny the debt, nor mince it. They see that God is spoiled of his honour by themselves and others, and that they are bound to a reparation. They confess their folly with shame and sorrow.

2. A pleading poverty, and utter inability to pay the debt, Psal. cxxx. 3, 4. 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' Who among all the sons of Adam is able to repair God's honour taken away by sin? There is an infinite evil in the least sin, which no creature is able to expiate, far less Adam's broken family, where the party has nothing to pay, whether he be owing ten talents or ten thousand.

3. A desire of free forgiveness, for Christ's sake, Dan ix.

17. ‘Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake.’ What can the debtor do, who is not able to pay? He must plead to be forgiven, or he is a ruined man. And it is to free forgiveness that the saints do all turn, Psal. cxxx. 3, 4. forecited. And it is a forgiving of the debt to us, though Christ merited it; for we can do nothing to procure it to ourselves. Our pardon indeed stood dear to Christ, but it cost us nothing, Rom. iii. 24. ‘We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.’

Now, the pardon which the saints are taught here to desire daily, is to be considered agreeably to the state of the parties for whom it is desired.

1. Pardon of the guilt of eternal wrath, is desired for those who are yet out of Christ, and in an unjustified state. Not for the saints themselves, who being already justified can never be more actually liable to eternal wrath, Rom. viii. 1. forecited. They are not under the law, but under grace, the threatenings of which extend no farther than rods, &c. Psal. lxxxix. 30. &c. forecited. It is one thing, what a saint may pray for, apprehending himself liable to eternal wrath, and another what Christ bids him pray for.

2. Pardon of the guilt of temporal strokes, is desired for the saints themselves. For under that guilt they may fall: and being duly considered, it is dreadful, as comprehending all miseries consistent with the love of God.

3. Declarative pardon is also desired for themselves, that they may be delivered from doubts, and fears of eternal wrath, Psal. iv. 6. ‘Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.’

SECONDLY, Let us consider the argument backing the petition, *as we forgive our debtors*. This is not put in our mouths, to move God to forgive us, but to move ourselves to believe that our prayer shall be heard, and so to encourage us.

Here I shall shew,

1. Who are meant by *our debtors*.
2. What is meant by *forgiving* them.
3. What is meant by *our forgiving as we forgive*.
4. What encouragement one can draw from his forgiving others, to hope that God will give the forgiveness desired.



*First*, Who are meant *by our debtors*? All such as have sinned against, or wronged us any manner of way, 1 Sam. ii. 25. For sin may reach both God and man at once; and in respect of the injury done to us by the sin of others, they are our debtors, owing us a reparation of the injury, which many times they either cannot or will not do.

*Secondly*, What is meant by our forgiving them? It is our hearty forgiving them the injury done to us, (to forgive the injury against God is not in our power), entertaining no hatred or malice against them, but loving them with a love of good-will, heartily wishing their good, and being ready to do them good, Matth. v. 44, 45. ‘But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.’ But it does not extend to a love of complacency and delight in them, in whom there appears no ground for that, either as men or as Christians, Psal. xxvi. 4. ‘I have not sat with vain persons,’ says David, ‘neither will I go in with dissemblers.’

*Thirdly*, What is meant by *forgiving as we forgive*?

1. It does, not denote the desire of a perfect equality or likeness betwixt God’s forgiving and ours, for at best ours is but lame, and is neither so free nor full as we would desire of God. But the reality of our forgiveness, that it is real and sincere, though imperfect (Matth. xviii, ult.), for which we can appeal to God.

2. It denotes our forgiving to go before the forgiveness here asked of God for ourselves, Luke xi. 4. ‘Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.’ And this a demonstrative proof, that the forgiveness the saints here ask for themselves is only the pardon of the guilt of fatherly anger, and the manifestation of pardon, and not the pardon of the guilt of eternal wrath, which concerns their state. For till this last be obtained, one cannot sincerely forgive others, Matth. xviii. 32, 33. ‘Then his Lord, after he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?’ No man can sincerely forgive his

brother, who does not so love him ; and none can love his brother, but he who loves God ; and none loves God, but he who is forgiven of God Luke, vii. 47. ‘ Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven the same loveth little.’

*Fourthly*, What encouragement can one draw from his forgiving others, to hope that God will give the forgiveness desired ?

1. What we find that we who are such evil and malignant creatures, so hateful and ready to hate one another, are by the power of God’s grace enabled to forgive those who have injured us, we have ground to hope that the most gracious God will forgive the injury against himself, even to those who are under the guilt of eternal wrath, it being easier for him to forgive a talent, than for us to forgive a mite.

2. From our disposition to forgive, we may confirm our confidence in God as our God, and therefore firmly believe that our feet shall be washed, where our whole body has been washed before.

I shall conclude with some inferences.

*Inf.* 1. Beware of sin, as ye would be of contracting a debt which ye are unable to pay ; and make sure your interest in the great Cautioner in time, lest ye be arrested ere ye are aware.

2. See your debts, and mourn over them, and apply to the blood of Christ for the pardon of them all, your imputed, your inherent, and your actual sins.

3. Pretend not to pay your debt by your good hearts, works, mourning, repentance, &c. but betake yourselves to free grace for forgiveness. If ever ye obtain pardon, it will be in the way of free grace.

4. An unforgiving irreconcilable disposition, and revengeful spirit, unfits men for praying. Forgive, if ye would be forgiven. And so it unfits for other duties, and particularly for the Lord’s supper, the seal of forgiveness.

*Lastly*, Come to God through Christ for pardon. He is a forgiving God. Why does he teach us to pray for pardon to ourselves and others, but that there is a fulness of mercy for pardon with him ?

THE SIXTH PETITION.

MATTH. vi. 13.—*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

**T**HIS is the second of those petitions which concern our souls, and it relates to temptation, for warding off that great evil, as the former for the enjoyment of a great good, the pardon of sin. Thus all that we are to seek for our personal, spiritual good, is deliverance from sin, from the guilt of it, petition fifth; and from the power of it, petition sixth. For these being obtained, the soul is happy, since nothing can hurt us but sin.

In discoursing from this subject, I shall shew,

I. The connection of this petition with the former, in the particle *and*.

II. The petition itself.

III. Apply.

I. I am to shew the connection of this petition with the former, in the particle *and*. This teaches us, that,

1. No man can with a good conscience sue to God for pardon, nor will he obtain it, who is not resolved to fight against sin in time coming, and to beware of it, Psal. lxi. 18. There are two things frightful to a penitent, the guilt of past sin, and the power of sin for the future. He is equally concerned for justification and sanctification. They who separate them, act hypocritically, and therefore cannot come speed at the throne of grace. They are unreasonable, in that they would be saved from death, and yet lie under the power of the disease. Unchristian, in that they would make Christ the minister of sin, and his pardon a sponce for a sinful life.

2. A pardoned sinner is not past danger. He is in a sickly country; and though he be recovered he is in danger of a relapse. He is still in the field of battle; and though he is cured of one wound, he will be fair to get another, if the Lord do not shield him. Therefore he is to pray, *Forgive*



*our debts; And lead us not into temptation, &c.* Nay, Satan will be most apt to bait the pardoned sinner, Acts xiii. 8.

II. Let us consider the petition itself, in which we pray, ‘That God would either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support and deliver us when we are tempted.’ It consists of two parts.

I. The first is for preventing grace, *Lead us not into temptation.*

II. The second is for assisting grace, *But deliver us from evil.*

The FIRST is for preventing grace, *Lead us not into temptation.*

Here I am to shew,

1. What is meant by *temptation*.

2. What by *leading us into temptation*.

3. What is the import of this part of the petition.

FIRST, What is meant by *temptation*? In general, it is a trial made on a man to see what is in him, and what he will do; and so the matter it is designed to bring forth may be good as well as evil. Thus ‘God did tempt Abraham \*,’

\* The author, in his manuscript treatise on Genesis, of which several extracts have been already given, thus renders and comments on these words: ‘The God himself; he tried, Abraham;’ i. e. the true God, and no other, the God who had made him the promise of Isaac, and fulfilled it, who had promised to establish the covenant with him, and had declared, that in him only, Abraham should be called a seed; even he tried Abraham, and tried him exquisitely, by calling him to sacrifice, that his son, thereby discovering him, and, as it were, opening him out like a banner displayed to public view, whereby his most firm faith in God, and absolute resignation unto him, were laid open to the view of all, to whose knowledge this his trial might at any time come. The word by which the trial is expressed, doth never, so far as I have observed, signify to entice unto sin. Neither was the thing sin which Abraham was by the trial carried to the very point of accomplishing of; since he had thereto the call of God, who was absolute Lord of the life of Isaac, as of all other men; and might vest whom he would with authority to take it away, as he has vested magistrates in other cases. But the matter was so suspicious like, that the infinitely holy Author of the trial is, by the sacred penman indicated in the strongest terms, for to cut off all suspicion of delusion in the case. He tells us, it was the GOD, i. e. the true God; and that word is in effect doubled, q. d. the true God, even the true God. And after all there is an emphatical stop after it, the GOD; he, &c. So that, with good reason, the force of that term is, with Junius and Tremellius, thus expressed, God himself, to the exclusion of all other. Moreover, that term looks backward, q. d. the same who had made so great promises with reference to Isaac; all which

Gen. xxii. 1. But ordinarily it is taken in an evil sense; and so it is here meant of temptation to sin, which is the plying of a man with some engine or other to draw him into sin. So in temptation four things are to be considered.

1. The party tempted or liable to temptation.
2. The parties tempting, the black instruments of temptation.
3. The bait wherewith the hook of temptation is busked.
4. The mischievous design.

*First*, The party tempted, or liable to temptation, viz. ourselves and others, who live in this world of pits and snares, Cant. iv. 8. Those who are in the upper house are beyond the reach of temptation; no hissing serpent is there; they are not within bow-shot of Satan. But here he rangeth up and down, 1 Pet. v. 8. here he has the length of his chain. Adam in paradise was tempted \*, and the second Adam too;

were hereby threatened to be quite overthrown and buried in oblivion. The word, he tried, is also emphatically pointed to shew it to have been a most exquisite trial, far surpassing all that Abraham had met with before. Nissah, he tried. It is of the form Phiel, and doth not clearly appear to be used in Kal at all. It notes an attempt, or essay, as David had not tried, viz. to go with Saul's armour, 1 Sam. xvii. 39. whether more full, as God tried Israel, Jud. iii. 1. and the queen of Sheba did Solomon, 1 Kings x. 1. or more slight, as the delicate woman had not tried the sole of her foot, to set it on the earth, Deut. xxviii. 56. made by some means, as by the nations, Jud. iii. 1. by hard questions, 1 Kings x. i. for discovering and laying open the object to view, as God tried the people, whether they would go in his law or not, Exod. xvi. 4. and Hezekiah, for to know all in his heart, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. even as a banner displayed is set forth to view, for it is akin to Nasa; to lift up, and to Nasas, whence Nes, a banner or standard. It differs from Bahhan, to prove, as an action incomplete from itself as completed: Nissah, importing only the discovering or laying open of the object; Bahhan, not only that, but also the judgment formed upon the discovery made. Hence, Psal. xcv. 9. Your fathers tried me: they proved me, &c. From all which, the formal notion of Nissah appears to be to try."

\* The temptation and seduction of our first parents is justly considered as the devil's master-piece, and a most glaring demonstration of that infernal spirit's implacable malice and desperate hatred against God and his innocent creatures. It was at the same time attended with the most interesting consequences to the guilty pair, and their descendants. It may not therefore be improper to give here several particulars relating to this remarkable event, selected from the author's notes on part of the second and third chapters of Genesis. As the essay on this book was written posterior to this illustration, and as these remarks contain many striking and important things concerning the grand temptation, and the effects thereof,

the one able to have stood, the other one who could not fall. What wonder then that he attack us, in whom he has bosom friends !

*Secondly*, The parties tempting, the black instruments of temptation.

it was judged expedient to insert them here, though not the most proper place, rather than omit them altogether, as they were not adverted to when the discourses on the fall of our first parents, and on the first sin in particular, vol. i. were printing. And it is presumed, their getting a place in this work will not only be a valuable addition to it, but of no small advantage to the reader, as the extracts undoubtedly contain several observations new and uncommon, and which appear to have escaped the notice of former commentators, all tending to shew the evil and horrid nature of sin, and the riches of sovereign grace in the salvation of ruined man, discovered to him immediately after his fatal transgression ; as well as they afford no mean specimen of the author's learning and skill in sacred criticism.

“ Gen. ii. 25. Now they two were naked. Here begins the history of the fall of man ; and this should have been the beginning of the third chapter. Though the division into verses is of divine authority, the division into chapters is not so.—The man, and his wife. They were naked, not only in presence of one another, but separately wherever they were.—But they would not have been ashamed of themselves, notwithstanding of their nakedness. The manner of expression bears, that so it was during the happy state they were in, but that it lasted not, that was soon over, and now is gone. The distinctive in these words is emphatical, q. d. But they would not, have, &c. i. e. they would not at all, in the least, have been, &c. Bosch is to be ashamed. If therefore, it were used in Pih. i. would be to shame, act, as the root in Kal is neuter. Here it is in Hithp. the relative of Pih. and therefore signifies formally to shame one's self. It is no where else used in this form, which is here purposely chosen, not only to intimate that our shame ariseth from a certain secret motion within our own breasts, but also, and chiefly, in opposition to Satan's endeavouring to shame them, on the account of their nakedness, which will appear by the sequel.

Gen. iii. 1. “ And the serpent, was subtil, from every wild beast of the field ; which Jehovah God had made, i. e. And the old serpent the devil, was subtil, nicely observing, and artfully improving, what might make for his mischievous design against mankind ; and in his attack he argued subtilly, from the state and case of the wild beasts ; every one of which he observed to have been made covered, none of them naked, though not of an erect posture, as man was ; and withal that they were left to range up and down in the field, at their pleasure. So Satan pitching upon the case of the wild beasts, as the great engine for the ruin of mankind, to be made effectual for that purpose, by a comparison instituted, with hellish subtilty, between it and the case of our first parents, found in it a double topic, which he improved to the actual ruining of them, and of all their posterity in their loins. The first of these was the nakedness of our first parents, while the wild beasts were all covered and created so. Their nakedness, he would persuade them, was shameful and indecent ; and that the wild beasts



1. The grand tempter is the devil, Matth. iv. 3. He was an angel of light, but is now turned to a tempting devil. An apostate from God, for whom there is no hope; and being God's irreconcilable enemy, goes about withdrawing men from their allegiance to their sovereign Lord. He is an ex-

were in that respect, in better case than they. This was the first temptation, as Moses shews us in these words, making up the first hemistich of this verse. And this is the plain literal sense of the words, as thus pointed. Compare Job xxxv. 11. 'Teaching us, from beasts of earth: and from flying thing of the heavens, &c'; with which compare chap. xii. 7. 'Come now ask thou beasts, and it (i. e. every one of them) will teach thee: and flying thing of the heavens; and it will tell to thee.' Accordingly the context doth not obscurely intimate the nakedness of our first parents to have been the first topic Satan made use of in his attack on them. God himself asks Adam, ver. 11. Who told him of his nakedness? which is no obscure indication, that the devil told them of it. Moses takes notice, ver. 7. that after eating of the forbidden fruit, their eyes were opened, and they knew they were naked, really needing clothes to hide their shame, which Satan would have persuaded them they were in need of before, and which they could not see while they stood in their integrity, there being really no such thing as the tempter alleged. Thus the connection is natural: 'The two were naked.—And the serpent, was subtil from the wild beasts of the field, to improve their case against the naked pair. This is confirmed from the words used by the inspired penman. He tells us, chap. ii. ult. They two were *Gnarummim* (naked), and here the serpent was *Gnarum* (subtil). Thus also, the last clause, which Jehovah God had made affords a more efficacious sense than otherwise, viz. being understood, not of God's making them simply, but of making them covered. And hereunto fitly agrees the Lord's clothing the sinful naked pair, with the skins of beasts; which was a humbling memorial to them of the spring of their ruin. *Nahhaseh* the serpent. Whether it is from the verb *Nahhaseh*, or the verb is from it, is all a case in this point. But the verb does import, subtil observation, learning by observation: particularly it is used of observing of omens, chap. xxx. 27. & xlv. 45. 2 Kings xxi. 6. And since *Nahhaseh* is not the only name of the serpent in Hebrew, it would seem that primarily and originally it was the name of the devil, the old serpent, given him from this fatal event, and communicated to that animal, as having been the instrument of the devil in this mischief. *Gnarum*, subtil; for the word is indifferent, either to good, as Prov. xii. 16. 23. or evil, as Job. v. 12. Now, it is true the Hebrew forms its comparative phrases, by the preposition from, which in that case may be rendered above, as Judg. xi. 25. Good, good, [art] thou; from (i. e. above) Balak, i. e. [Art] thou better, better; than Balak? So Prov. viii. 11. Hag. ii. 9. Eccl. iv. 9. & vii. 1, 2, 3. 5. 8. Is. liv. 1. Psal. cxviii. 8, 9. Prov. xxv. 7. But the comparative sense cannot be admitted here. For, (1.) The reading offered is the primary and literal one, therefore not without necessity to give place to another. (2.) The comparative phrase is elliptical. And no ellipsis is to be admitted without necessity neither. (3.) The word from all, doth not immediately relate to the adjective subtil, but to the substan-

pert tempter; and has now had the experience of several thousand years in the hellish trade. He has his devices for entrapping of poor mortals, and knows how to suit his temptations, as they may best take.

2. Men are tempters to one another. Satan so prevails with

tive verb was, as the principal word of the part referred to: so the construction is not. The serpent was subtil; [subtil] from, &c. but, The serpent. was subtil; [he was so.] from, &c. If the comparative phrase had been designed, I conceive the adjective would have been set before the substantive-verb; that so it might have related immediately to the word from-all: thus, The serpent, subtil was; from, &c. i. e. subtil from, that is more subtil than. And in all the above cited texts, bearing the comparative phrase, the adjective is so posited; being either the only, or the first, word of the clause, or part of the clause, in which it is found: by which situation it plainly relates to the word that hath the proposition. — ‘And he said unto the woman, then, how hath God said, Ye shall not eat of all, tree of the garden? The phrase not all is used for not any. Thus the woman understood it, as appears from the following verse. And so Satan was a liar, in the strictest sense from the beginning. Here is the second topic Satan made use of, viz. the restraint our first parents were laid under in respect of their food, while the wild beasts were at liberty in that point. In what words he proposed this second temptation, is here recorded; though his speech on the first is not. But that he did speak on this mischievous design, and unto the woman too, before he uttered the words here recorded, the text itself doth plainly intimate. The words Then how q. d. More than that, in the next place, shew that there was a foregoing speech he had to her. Accordingly the text saith, He said unto the woman, b. d. unto the woman unto the woman; i. e. he said unto the woman words agreeable to the narration foregoing, and he said unto the woman the words following. Accordingly the word He-said. is by the distinctive fitted to be constructed after this manner. Comp 2 Sam. xi. 8. And said David, to Uriah; Go down to thy house. And it is generally owned, that *Aph ki*, the first words of the devil which are here recorded, is never put in the beginning of a speech; and that some words of the tempter did go before these. I conceive, then, the holy text itself intimates to us, that the devil in the serpent spoke to the woman to this purpose: ‘What can be the design of God in this! How is it, that when every wild beast of the field hath a covering put upon it by his own hand, though they do withal look downward; yet ye are naked, and that in an erect posture, in the which there is a shameful indecency, that ye would manifestly see if your eyes were opened: Then, in the next place, How is it, that, whereas they are at full liberty, in the open fields, ranging up and down at their pleasure, eating freely whatever is before them, ye are under a notable restraint as to your food, that ye may not eat of any tree of the garden?’ Thus food and raiment were early snares to mankind.

Ver. 2. ‘And the woman said, unto the serpent: of the fruit of trees of the garden, we may eat.’ Thus she repels this temptation, directly contradicting what Satan advanced concerning the restraint laid on them as to their

them, as to act his part one against another. Sometimes they set themselves to drive others into sin by force, Acts xxvi. 11. sometimes gently to draw them into it, Gen. xxxix. 7. And Satan gets not only wicked men, but many

food: and she also had repelled the other, continuing unshamed of her nakedness.

Ver. 3. "But of the fruit of the tree which [is] in the midst of the garden." This part of the woman's answer is elliptical: and the ellipsis is of that Tort, which is caused by horror arising from the subject mentioned, q. d. "But of the fruit of the tree which [is] in midst of the garden! Supply, for the sense, we may not eat, of it 'tis said lest ye die." The last member of this verse, by the pointing, refers to both the preceding: and that points us to the latter part of the words understood, as the foregoing words, to the former part of them. "God hath said, Ye shall not eat, of it; and shall not touch on it, viz. the fruit of the forbidden tree." They were forbidden, not only to eat of it, but even to touch it at all, though never so lightly. From these words, directed to a plurality of persons, it appears, that God repeated, in the hearing of Adam and Eve together, the law concerning the forbidden fruit, together with the grant of the fruit of the rest of the trees of the garden; and consequently, that Eve had the revelation of the divine will and pleasure, in this matter, from the mouth of God himself. And the repetition of this law and grant, which were first given to Adam alone, chap. ii. 16, 17. seems to have been made at the solemnity of God's bringing in the woman unto the man: for it natively takes place, in connection with chap. i. 29.—Lest ye die. These words import no doubting, being the Lord's own words repeated by Eve.

Ver. 4. "And the serpent said unto the woman: Ye shall not dying, die, i. e. Ye shall not at all, die." Satan flatly contradicts the divine threatening; and that with an air of great confidence, for the stop between these two words is emphatic. That this is the sense of the phrase, appears from Psal. xlix. 8-7ths, He cannot redeeming redeem, i. e. He cannot at all, or by any means, redeem. The negative here doth primarily and directly affect but one of the verbs, as Exod. v. 23. and xxxiv. 7. In the phrase respecting the certainty of the thing, it affects them both in conjunction equally, as Jer. xxxviii. 15. Will ye not, putting me to death put me to death, i. e. surely put me to death.

Ver. 5. But God he knoweth, viz. very well. Compare the last clause of this verse. Satan pretends to open up the mystery of the restraint put upon man, as to the fruit of the forbidden tree. "That in the day of your eating of it; then they shall be opened, viz. your eyes, q. d. Your eyes are now shut to the shameful indecency of your nakedness:" but if once ye eat of that fruit, it will open your eyes, make you so sharp-sighted that ye shall clearly see the truth of what I say. And therefore it is, ye are forbidden to meddle with it; that ye may still be kept in a mist. Thus Satan chains together the two temptations, ver. 1. and so makes an attack with both at once. And thus, from the beginning, he sported himself with his deceivings, the cheats put upon man, by him "And ye shall be, as God, as God himself, appears from ver. 21; whereas now ye are in some respect worse than the wild beasts. Knowing, of good and evil;"



times godly men, yoked to this his tempting work, as in the case of Peter, Matth. xvi. 22, 23.

3. The lusts of the heart are temptations to all, Jam. i. 14. This is the most dangerous enemy, as being within. These are Satan's trustees, which effectually lead us off the road,

singularly skilful and expert in the matter. Thus the tempter promiseth, from the opening of their eyes by eating of the fruit, a vast penetration as to good and ill, q. d. Not only shall ye know the particular, which I see ye are now ignorant of, viz. the shameful indecency of your nakedness: but your knowledge will be universally improved, and that to a pitch.

Ver. 6. "And the woman saw, that good was the tree for meat, and that lovely that [tree was] to the eyes: She saw it pleasant to the eyes, and her heart began to entertain a hankering after it. The demonstrative that is emphatic; and is here used to point out that fatal tree, to the minds of her posterity. An affection it put for a thing very much to be affected, the abstract for the concrete. The manner of expression, the course of words being precipitated, represents lively the infernal fire now flaming in the woman's breast. And [that] the tree [was] desirable, for to afford wit; that is, to make them knowing of good and evil, ver. 5. singularly skilful and expert in those matters. Thus the tempter was believed, and his lies received for truth. "And she took [some] of its fruit, and ate [it.]" Observe here the degrees of the woman's yielding to the temptation. (1.) Her mind and understanding went off by unbelief: she saw and judged the tree to be good for meat, though it had no word of divine appointment for that end, but on the contrary was forbidden as deadly. [2.] Her affection towards it riseth, and she hankers after it. (3.) She is inflamed with the desire of it. (4.) She pulls it with her hand, and eats it with her mouth. "And she gave also to her husband, with her, and he ate." Not, she gave to her husband with her, as if he had been present with her, in her encounter with the serpent; no, Satan managed the matter more artfully: but, she gave to her husband, [to eat] with her, she plucked off so much of the fruit, as served her to eat, for the time while she was at the tree; and not only so, but she came eating unto her husband, and gave him also of it, to eat with her: and he ate with her accordingly. The word also is here emphatical; for in giving it to him, the deadly morsel was given to all mankind, the covenant being made with him, before the woman was in being, chap. ii. 16.

Ver. 7. Then were opened, the eyes of them both, viz. to see what they never saw, nor could have seen, before, namely, the shamefulfulness of their nakedness: and so were Satan's deceitful words, ver. 5. accomplished. And they knew, they knew, i. e. they knew, alas! they knew to sad experience. That nakednesses, (i. e. stark naked) they [were.] The abstract for the concrete in the superlative degree. They saw their nakedness most shameful and indecent, and that they were greatly in need of a covering.

Ver. 8. "And they heard, even the voice of Jehovah God, walking in the garden, i. e. the voice walking: for so the words are by the pointing constructed. This voice which they heard walking, was the Word, the eternal Son of God, now entering upon the execution of the Mediatory

and rob us of our purity. They are deceitful lusts; and as the heart of man is furnished with them, it is deceitful above all things, Jer. xvii. 9.

*Thirdly*, The bait wherewith the hook of temptation is busked. This is always some seeming good, if it were but the

office, and coming to discover the eternal counsel concerning the salvation of sinners.——At the wind of the day: i. e. in the cool of the day, when the sun declining, there was a breeze of wind, which would quickly let the guilty couple see the insufficiency of their fig-leaf coverings, for hiding their nakedness. The Hebrew text mentions three parts of the artificial day, one of which is called the blowing of the day, Cant. ii. 17; another the warm of the day, Gen. xviii. 1; a third, here, the wind of the day. The first is the morning, as appears from the text wherein it is mentioned: the second from morning to noon, and as long after it as before: the third from thence to the end of the day, otherwise called the space between the two evenings, Exod. xii. 6; i. e. between three and six of the clock in the afternoon.——And the man hid himself, and his wife [hid herself], for so the pointing shews the words to be constructed. The guilty couple, at hearing the sound of the Voice walking in the garden, ran asunder, he one way, she another, and hid themselves in different places, not together. From the face of Jehovah God: i. e. from the *Schechinah*, the visible sign of the divine presence, the habitation of the divine majesty, from whence they were to have solemn communion with him.——In midst of tree of the garden. In some groves or other, some places where the trees were thick about them. The divine presence, which before was the joy of their hearts, was now become a terror to them, being guilty.

[Extracts from the notes on ver. 9.—14. must be omitted for want of room].

Ver. 15. And I will set enmity; between thee, and between this woman, viz. Eve, called the woman all along hitherto, and now standing as a criminal before the Judge, together with the serpent. And this looks to the friendship between that woman and the serpent, in their joining together, to the dishonour of God, and the ruin of mankind. *q. d.* And whereas you and this woman did conspire to violate my law, and to ruin this man, I will settle an enmity, a lasting enmity, between you, for all time coming. And this is a promise of efficacious grace, to convert and bring the woman to repentance, so that she should mortally hate, and seek the destruction of, the power and works of the devil, in herself and others.——And between thy seed, and between her seed: understand, I will set enmity; therefore these words are in a clause by themselves, as being equally constructed with the clause concerning the woman, and the clause concerning her seed: which shews even the gracious woman's utter inability to convey that enmity into her seed, and an equal necessity of efficacious grace for that end, to them, as well as to her. Hereby it was secured, that this enmity should not die with that woman, but that it should be propagated from generation to generation; the Lord himself still setting this enmity against the devil, into the heart of the woman's seed, to the end of the world. It is manifest, that the serpent, the devil, can have no seed, but by imitation only: but the woman was capable of having a seed two ways, viz. (1.)

satisfying of a lust or a humour. In drawing or alluring temptations, the bait is some seeming good to be got. Thus was the present world to Demas, and the thirty pieces of silver to Judas. In driving temptations, the bait is some seeming good to be kept, by preventing of evil, as those spoke of,

By imitation. (2.) By generation of her body, Now, the woman's seed here mentioned is opposed to the serpent's seed: and the serpent's seed is the devil's angels, and wicked men, called his seed in respect of their imitation of him. Therefore the woman's seed is believers in Christ, called her seed, not in respect of natural generation, for the holy enmity, the enmity against the serpent and his seed, goes not so wide as that; but in respect of imitation, as followers of her faith: for the holy enmity is of equal latitude with that imitation; all and every one who become her seed, by believing as she did, being thereupon blessed with true (evangelical) repentance, according to the promise of the Lord's setting the enmity in the woman's seed. And in this respect Adam himself was one of her seed; in testimony whereof, he called her the mother of all living. Thus the believing Gentiles are Abraham's seed, to wit, by imitation, being followers of his faith. All this is agreeable to the scripture phraseology, in which one who is first in any thing, leading the way which others follow, is called the father of them, as chap. iv. 20, 21. — That shall bruise away (to) thee the head; i. e. bruise away thy head, as a thing that is bruised into so very minute particles, that it flies away, to be seen no more. That shall do it, viz. the woman's seed: not, her seed by imitation, opposed to the serpent's seed; but her seed by generation of her body, opposed to the serpent himself. And that is the man Christ Jesus only. He is the seed of the woman in a proper sense, yea, in the strictest propriety: and he only is so; all other men being the seed of men. Believers only are the woman's seed, mentioned in the foregoing hemistich, and not Christ: for they alone are the seed in which the enmity is set. Jesus Christ being the speaker, ver. 8. is the party who sets the enmity; not in the serpent and his seed, for their enmity is not from God; but in the woman, and her seed there mentioned: but he is none of those in whom the enmity is set; for the setting of the enmity being an introducing of a hatred, which was not before in the subject, it cannot agree to him. But he is the woman's seed here meant, and he alone: for the bruising away of the serpent's head can agree to none other but him. The head of the serpent, is that which holds together the venom, in its deadly killing efficacy: and as long as it is hale, the serpent can kill with his venom. Now, according to the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 56 the strength of sin is the law. Wherefore the bruising away of the serpent's head, is the abolishing of the law as a covenant of works, armed with the curse and threatening of eternal death, in respect of the woman and her seed by imitation; i. e. believers. This was a work competent to Christ only: and he did it, by satisfying the law fully, in their room and stead. Hereby he disarmed it of its curse, and as it were grinded to powder the stones, on which the ministration of death was engraven, as to the woman and her believing seed: though as to others it still remains in its full force. Now, the serpent's head being bruised away, his venom is destroyed, and he can kill no more; as when a cup is bruised, the liquor in it perissheth. Sin is



Matth. xiii. 21. who, 'when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by are offended.' And it is no small advantage in temptation, to see through the bait, that it is but a bait to deceive. For so one will perceive, that it will not quit the cost, that by the bargain they will never

the serpentine venom, most deadly, therefore, metonymically called the head, Deut. xxxii. 33. Poison of dragons, [is] their wine: and head of asps, cruel, i. e. venom of asps, (the containing being put for the contained), cruel venom, that is deadly and killing. So Jesus Christ bruising away the serpent's head, by his full satisfaction made to the law, sin is destroyed; and sin being destroyed, death is abolished; and death being abolished, the power of the devil is entirely ruined. The enemies mentioned in the first hemistich, are the serpent, and his seed, on the one side; the woman and her believing seed, on the other. An unequal match! How then shall the victory fall to the side of the latter! Why, an eminent One, the seed of the woman by generation of her body, as his brethren are by imitation of her faith, shall be more than match for the serpent, and all his power, and quite destroy it: so shall the woman and her believing seed be more than conquerors through him. For he shall bruise away the serpent's head. Thus the woman's seed is taken collectively, in the first hemistich, but here individually: and this agreeable to the phraseology of the Holy Ghost elsewhere, chap. xxvi. 4. 'And I will make to increase even thy seed - - -; and they shall bless themselves in thy seed; all, nations of the earth.' The former is meant of the collective body of Isaac's seed, the latter of Christ alone. So chap. xxii. 17, 18. & xxviii. 14. Thus, 2 Sam. vii. 12. 'I will set up even thy seed, after thee - - - 13. That shall build a house, for my name.' That, to wit, Solomon, the seed of David by way of eminency. And thou shalt bruise away [to] him the heel, i. e. bruise away his heel, that is, his body in the likeness of sinful flesh, with which he trod on earth, liable to infirmities and death. Here is a vehement encounter, bruising on both sides. But that seed of the woman bruises the serpent's head, where the bruise is deadly; the serpent bruises not his head, but his heel, where the bruise is not deadly. This manner of expression looks to what goes before, touching the sin and punishment of the old serpent. And the heat of this battle was on the cross. Upon that tree, that seed of the woman in an erect posture, and naked (Heb. xii. 2), bruised the head of the serpent, and bruised it away, fully satisfying the demands of the law, John xix. 30; destroying sin, Rom. vi. 6; and abolishing death, 2 Tim. i. 10: while the serpent, doomed to go upon the belly, and incapable to reach his head, bruised and bruised away his heel, bringing his mortal body to the dust of death, to the darkness of the grave, never to be seen more, liable to death or infirmity, Rom. vi. 9. Here ends a closed section. The woman believes the promise: the enmity, set in by efficacious grace, commeth: and the serpent, in virtue of the curse pronounced upon him, is hurried away from the place of this judgment. But the judgment is not yet over, though the judgment of death is, which the serpent carries away upon him. [Compare the author's notes on the Marrow of Modern Divinity, edit. 1726, p. 41.]

better their condition, Matth. xvi. 26. 'For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'

*Fourthly*, The mischievous design. The design of the great tempter, and the design of the thing, is always the ruin

[Extracts from the notes on ver. 16——19, must also be omitted for want of room.]

Ver. 20. 'And the man called, the name of his wife, Eve. The name given her at first, was taken from man, she being called woman; or manness, chap. ii. 23; for then Adam considered her chiefly as a wife, as one made after his own likeness. But the new name he gave her, after the awful solemnity before described, is taken from life; for then he eyed her chiefly as a mother, the mother of the living and life-giving seed. And by his naming her so, he declared his faith of the promise. And thus by the same method, that God reconciled man to himself, he reconciled the man and his wife, namely, through that promised feed.—When, she was, mother of all living, namely, of the life-giving feed and his brethren, who shall live for ever. She was mother of these, when she got this name; but of no other. She had then been solemnly declared mother of the Messiah, the seed that shall bruise away the serpent's head; and had actually commenced mother of all that should believe in him, by believing first herself. And no other seed of hers had been as yet mentioned, as her seed, but what should be at enmity with the serpent the devil. And what comfort could it have been either to Adam or her, that she was to be the mother of others also; since to them she was to be the mother of death, rather than of life?

Ver. 21. 'And Jehovah God made, to Adam and to his wife, coats of skin, and caused them to put [them] on.' Coats of skin are skin-coats, or coats made of skin. These skin coats were a humbling memorial to our first parents, of the first spring of their ruin. Satan, by his subtilty, induced them to accuse God, of dealing better by the beasts of the field, than by them, in that these were covered, but they were left naked. Now they are covered like them; and instead of being like God, are like beasts. Thus the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways. I make no question but this clothing of Adam and Eve, was a typical action. Sacrifices were offered by Abel, chap. iv. 4. And if by Abel, then by Adam too before him, from whom he learned it. And being an acceptable piece of service to God, they behoved to be of divine institution, which we can nowhere find, if not in this text. The skins of the sacrifices, by the law of Moses, were given to the priests, Lev. vii. 8: the great promise of Christ to come, which was all along confirmed by sacrifices, was now made: the curse was now laid on the beasts in man's stead; and so they were fitted to be made sacrifices, as God himself should be pleased to design the kinds of them, to be so used: God spake to Noah, before the flood, concerning clean and unclean beasts, as a distinction well known to him, chap. vii. 2. being handed down from Adam; in token whereof, it is marked, that Abel's sacrifice was of the flock, viz. sheep or goats, which were clean beasts: it was after this that access to the tree of life, a seal of the first covenant, was blocked up, ver. 24; it was at the wind of the day, ver. 8. that these

of the party, by falling into sin, and misery by sin. They are snares and traps for ruin, 1 Cor. x. 12. and land men in the bottomless pit.

SECONDLY, What is meant by leading us into temptation? It is holy wise providence so ordering matters about us as

things were transacted; the same time of the day, at which Christ in the fulness of time, died a real sacrifice for sin. From all which one may reasonably conclude, that the promise, the new covenant, being promulgated, and by our first parents believed and embraced, was instantly, by divine appointment, confirmed and sealed by sacrifice; by which means the tree of life was superseded, as the passover, by the institution and administration of the Lord's supper; and the girdle of fig-leaves, by the skin-coats; and Christ was typically slain from the foundation of the world, (Rev. xiii. 8.), which is the date of the events of this open section, Gen. ii. 4: and that these beasts of whose skins the coats were made, were clean beasts, which, Adam and Eve having first laid their hands upon the heads of them, were offered in sacrifice, by Adam as the priest, to whom accordingly the skins were given, for his own use, and the use of his wife, whose recourse was to be to him, for what she wanted. Thus these skin-coats signified the righteousness of Christ; by which our spiritual nakedness is covered, we are defended from the wrath of God; and adorned in his sight, Isa. lxi. 10. God himself made these coats; for it is the righteousness of God, Rom. iii. 22 and they were put on for benefit by them: for it is the righteousness of God, by faith of Jesus Christ, *ibid*. They were made to the man and his wife; for it is unto all, *ib*. They were actually clothed with them, had them on them; for it is upon all them that believe, *ib*. even Eve, as well as Adam; for there is no difference, *ib*. And in this matter, there is neither male nor female, they are all one in Christ Jesus, Gal. iii. 28. The same God who made them, caused the man and his wife to put them on; for as the righteousness itself is God's free gift, so is faith also, by which it is put on and applied, Eph. ii. 8. In these coats Adam and Eve appeared like the beasts whose skins they wore: and they who have on them the righteousness of Christ, appear in some measure like him, in holiness of life, walking as he also walked, 1 John ii. 6. Thus the coats of skin were garments of honour [put] upon their flesh, as Onkelos paraphrases the text.—To this occasion also, I would refer the original of eating of flesh, as brought in by sacrificing. This agrees best with the vanity and bondage (*φθορα*) of corruption (or destruction), which the creature was unwillingly made subject to, through the fall of man, Rom. viii. 20, 21. the chief branch of which bondage Peter expresseth, 2 Eph. ii. 12. brute beasts made (*εις φθοραν*) for destruction. So man's new diet would be of use to keep him in mind, that it was by eating of the flesh, and drinking of the blood, of the great sacrifice, he was to have life, now that the first covenant was broken. Here ends this open section, bearing an enlargement of the history of the three last days of the creation, wherein there is a very particular account of man's creation, on the sixth day, the making of the woman, their fall and their restoration, all in a continued connection. Those who cannot believe that so many various events, as are here related from chap. ii. 7. were crowded within the compass of one day, may consider



we are attacked with temptation to sin, brought upon the stage to fight with temptations, so as we may give a proof of ourselves. Here consider,

How the Lord leads men into temptation; and how it consists with his holiness so to lead them.

the words of the Holy Ghost, Psal. xlix. 13 12ths. Adam in honour could not night, without receding from the propriety of the expression, till they have otherwise proved the necessity of so doing. And withal they may consider the variety of events, relative to the second Adam's death, recorded Luke xxii. 66. to the end, chap. xxiii. 1,—33. and elsewhere; and what time these events took place. There one finds, the sanhedrim is convened; Christ is examined and condemned before them; they lead him to Pilate; he holds a court; Christ is accused, and answers for himself, before him; Pilate sticks, and will not go forward so cleverly as the Jews would have him; he removes the cause to Herod's court; they had about a mile to go to Herod, and Christ appears before him; he is questioned by him in many words, vehemently accused, mocked, arrayed in a gorgeous robe, and sent back to Pilate again; Pilate convenes the chief priests, the rulers, and the people; there is a mighty struggle between Pilate and them, about him, the former to save him, the latter to get him condemned to the cross; Pilate's wife sends to him; Jesus is scourged, John xix. 1. led by the soldiers into the common hall; they put on him a scarlet robe, Matth. xxvii. 27, 28. they plate a crown of thorns, and put on his head, John xix. 2. Christ is brought out again, and shewn to the chief priests, as a spectacle of commiseration, by Pilate, ver. 5. Pilate prevails not, goes in again into the judgement-hall, examines him anew, ver. 9,—12. Jesus is brought thence also, and Pilate sits down in a place called the Pavement, and there has a new encounter with the Jews, ver. 13,—15. Pilate washeth his hands, declares the pannel innocent, Matth. xxvii. 24. and then sentenceth him to die; then they lead him out of the city to Calvary, and crucify him there: All these things were done in the space of half a day, men being the immediate actors in them: for Christ was crucified about twelve o'clock, and hung upon the cross more than three hours, Luke xxiii. 44,—46. [Compare the author's notes on the Marrow of Modern Divinity, edit. 1726 p. 40. 42.]

Ver. 22. And Jehovah God said; Behold the man (who) was as one of us, viz. being made after our image, chap. i. 26, 27. the image of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which is one, and but one, in the blessed Three; so that he was, as it were, a fourth, a God upon earth, partaking of that image: so groundless was the temptation, ver. 5. Ye shall be as God. The plurality here mentioned cannot be God and angels, for the image of God and angels is not one, but two vastly different; neither was man made after the image of angels, but of God himself, chap. i. 26, 27. Therefore not angels, but the three persons of the ever-blessed Trinity, are here meant. That there is here an ellipsis of the relative, appears from the pointing, which determines the word, the man to be the accusative after behold, not the nominative before was: and the pointing being observed, our language bears the ellipsis, as well as the Hebrew. Comp. Lam. iii 1. I (am) the man, hath seen affliction. Psal. lii, 9-7ths. Behold

1. How the Lord leads men into temptation. He does so only two ways.

1. By a providential placing them in such circumstances, as the heart may take occasion of sin from them. Thus innocent Adam was led into temptation, being placed within

the man; would not, &c. i. e. the man [that], &c. as our translators rightly supply it in both these texts. For knowing, good and evil, q. d. and particularly was as one of us, in the point of knowing good and ill; knowing ill as we know it, though not experimentally as now he does. "And now lest he should put forth his hand; and take also of the tree of life; and eat, that he may live for ever." This verse is so far from being an irony, that it is a most pathetic lamentation of the Mediator over fallen man, with a most affectionate concern to prevent a second ruin. And in token hereof, the sentence is imperfect; something is suppressed, and stopt as by a sob; as when David's grief swelling, cut short his expression, Psal. vi. 4 3ds. The same is to be observed in his lamentation over Jerusalem, in the days of his flesh, when he wept over that city, Luke xix. 41, 42. The sense of the whole is, q. d. "Behold the man!" What a spectacle of commiseration is he now, who not long ago was as one of us, with our image in perfection upon him; who was as one of us, particularly for knowing of good and ill, knowing the same as we know them, yet could not be content with that, but would needs otherwise be as God, knowing of good and ill; and for that end put forth his hand, and ate of the forbidden tree: how much more now that he is fallen, will he entertain the thought of making himself proof against dying, slight his own mercy, thinking to keep himself in this miserable life? and for that foolish end, eat of the tree of life, with the same success with which he did of the tree of knowledge, and by eating of it reject the covenant of grace he hath embraced, and, by betaking himself to the seal of the covenant of works, run back to that covenant where there is no life for him now? So then, lest he put forth his hand again; and take also, of the tree of life, as he took of the tree of knowledge; and eat of the former, with a design thereby to render himself immortal, as he did eat of the latter, that he might be as God, knowing of good and ill, and so reject the new covenant, by eating of this tree, as he broke the first covenant by eating of the other tree, [1 must, I will set him away out of paradise], to prevent his being ruined a second time. [Compare the author's notes on the Marrow of Modern Divinity, edition, 1726. p. 19.]

Ver. 23. "And Jehovah God, did set him away from the garden of Eden;" i. e. obliged him to remove out of the garden. That no ignominy nor violence is imported in this word, whatever may be in some things, of which it is used, appears in that it is the word Moses constantly makes use of, in the name of God, to Pharaoh, in favour of the Israelites, Exod. iv. 23. v. 1. vii. 26. al. viii. 1. viii. 16. al. 20 — For to dress even the ground; what he was taken away from, i. e. from whence he was taken away. Instead of dressing the garden, chap. ii. 15. which was one inclosed plat of ground, he is set to dress the ground, q. d. the ground the ground, i. e. the ground in several plats here and there. The construction is, to dress the ground; [to dress] what (i. e. that which) he was taken away from. So he was sent back to the place, where he was formed, chap. ii. 7. From

reach of the forbidden fruit; Joseph, by being alone in the house with an adulterous woman, where yet he came fair off; Achan, by seeing the wedge of gold, and having an opportunity to take it, where he fell by it; Peter by being in the high Priest's hall, where he was attacked. It is on this ac-

thence the Lord brought him in unto paradise, and there made the covenant with him, and now that he had broken that covenant, he is sent back to the place whence he came; there to dress the ground, and as it were to dig his own grave; until he should return unto that ground, from whence he had been taken away.

Ver. 24. So he quite turned out, even the man. The Lord set him away, ver. 23. So he quite turned him out of paradise, for good and all, never to come back again. As this is the genuine notion of the word, so here it is most agreeable to the pathetic lamentation, and affectionate concern shewn for man, ver. 22. whereof this was the effect. And since this word in Pihel denotes no violence, it can far less import any such thing in Kal. It is not more generally, than justly, observed, that these two words rendered setting away, and turning out, are terms used in the law of divorce. The law, as the covenant of works, was, according to the scripture, the first husband, Rom. vii. Paradise was the house of that husband. But our first parents having once sinned, were no more able to live with the first husband: So the Son of God, as supreme Lord, wrote the divorce, dissolved the relation, upon most weighty grounds, and turned them out of its house. And never was there a divorce and turning out so great a mercy to any poor broken hearted woman, who could have no comfortable life with a husband, as this was to Adam and Eve in their lapsed state, and will be to all who imitate their faith in Jesus Christ, the second Husband. And he made to inhabit on the east to the garden of Eden, i. e. east in respect of the garden. Now, the garden was on the east part of Eden, chap. ii. 8. And the dwelling of the cherubims here assigned them, was east in respect of the garden. Therefore this dwelling-place was without Eden, or at least in the outmost part of Eden, to the east. And even the flame of the sword, [the sword] that turned itself. Flame of the sword is a flame like a sword, and therefore a real flame, but the sword not real. For to keep; even the way of the tree of life, i. e. he did this, that thereby he might keep the way leading to the tree, or trees, of life; that man might not come upon that way: for the two last clauses are, by the pointing, balanced with the two first of this hemistich. The pointing of the first word of this verse, and the manner of expression used through the whole, agreeing to the native effect of that pointing, persuade me, that the cherubims and the fiery sword were within the garden before this time, as well as the man was: and that he being turned out, they were turned out too in mercy to him. For the first word of the verse, being by a distinctive separated from the second word, with which it doth undoubtedly agree in construction; that shews it to be constructed, not only with that second word, but also with what follows, since the words themselves will admit the same, q. d. "And he quite turned out even the man: [And he quite turned out] and made to inhabit on the east, the cherubims; and flame, &c." I conceive, then, that Moses here gives us an account of



count that afflictions and persecutions are called *temptations*, Jam. i. 2. because there the man is beset with such things as are apt to work on his corruptions, and so to lead him into sin, through fear or hope.

(2.) By permitting Satan or his instruments, to tempt them to sin. God has them in a chain, but sometimes, for holy wise ends, the Lord lets them loose, 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. compared with 1 Chron. xxi. 1. They need no positive order;

the *Schechinah*, the visible sign of the divine presence, called the glory of Jehovah, or of God, Ezek. x. 4. 19. there represented to be upon the cherubims; in respect of which God is said to dwell between the cherubims, or, as the Holy Ghost phraseth it, to sit the cherubims, Psal. lxxx. 2. 1sts: so that the removal of the cherubims was the removal of the *Schechinah*: that the fiery sword was an attendant on the *Schechinah*: that they both were within the garden, while man stood in his integrity: but that man having fallen, could no more enjoy the *Schechinah* there: nevertheless, being reconciled to God through the blood of the new covenant, and set away out of paradise; it was removed too, and the fiery sword after it: and that then the *Schechinah* inhabited, without the garden, on the east, next to the place where the man now was; and the fiery sword between the *Schechinah* and the garden, according to the order of the text; that so man might have access to the former, but no access any more to the latter. Accordingly, Moses speaks of them, not as of things newly appearing, but in the same manner of expression, as of the man, and of the tree of life. It is reasonable to think, that the *Schechinah* was in paradise before the fall; man being there in a state of communion with God, and the tabernacle of God being said to be with men in the heavenly paradise, Rev. xxi. 3: and that the fiery sword, attended it there; since man was then in a state of probation, not beyond the hazard of the sword of justice, being capable to sin, and fall under the curse. And the removing of the *Schechinah* from out of the garden, where man sinned, unto another place, upon that occasion, is very agreeable to the method of the divine dispensation in such cases. Now, the *Schechinah* being thus removed out of paradise, together with its attendant the fiery sword; man was effectually kept from returning into it, by the lively majesty of the one, and the terror of the other: for should he have attempted a return, he behoved to have turned his back on the *Schechinah*, and set his face to the fiery sword; they being posted in manner above observed. Moreover, by this means, Adam, and the church in his time, were provided of a gospel-paradise, a place of the world, where was the divine presence, called the face of Jehovah, from which Cain was afterwards banished, chap. iv. 16. And thus was our Lord Jesus Christ, the true *Schechinah* Col. ii. 9. turned out of the vineyard, Matth. xxi. 39. and made to inhabit in the dust of death, by his burial: whereby all believers in him, are for ever after freed from the law as a covenant of works, Rom. vii. 4. By the connection of events narrated in the text, all this seems to have been done at that time of the day wherein Christ was buried.

if God do not restrain them, they will fall on with all their might.

2. How it consists with God's holiness to lead men into temptation. This will appear from the consideration of three things.

(1.) God gave man a power to stand against temptation, if he would, Eccl. vii. 29. 'God made man upright.' Thus the stock was put in man's hand, and he is bound still to stand out against it.

(2.) God is debtor to none, either to keep them out of such circumstances, as the heart may not take occasion of sin from thence, or to restrain Satan, or his instruments, from tempting them. Nay, it is just with him so to do, since men often cast themselves unnecessarily upon temptation, and will not be kept back from sin.

(3.) God can bring good out of it, for his own glory, the sinner's profit, or both. Thus Hezekiah and Peter were checked for their pride and vanity, and humbled.

THIRDLY, What is the import of this part of the petition?

1. That we are in danger to be tempted to sin. Temptations are ready for us in this evil world; the devil, the world, and the flesh, are ready to attack us, and break in upon us, if the hedge whereby they are held off were but removed, 1 Pet. v. 8. We walk amidst armed enemies, amongst lion's dens, amidst sparks of fire; were they but let loose, they would set on vigorously.

2. That no temptation can befall us without an over-ruling providence. Though the lion roar, he is in a chain, and cannot set on us, but as he is permitted of God, Job. i. 8,—10. He who rules the sea, when the waters thereof do roar, has an over-ruling hand over devils, men and the corruptions of our hearts, that no flood can break out, but where the sluice is opened, he withdrawing the restraint.

3. That when the Lord leads us into temptation, we will be sure of an attack. There is no hope in the mercy of our enemies, no hope that they will let an occasion of fighting us slip. He that goes about seeking his prey, will not pass by it, when it is laid in his way. We are ready to let advantages against sin and Satan slip, but they will let none slip, which they have against us.

4. That God may justly lead us into temptation, and leave

us under the power of them, Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12. How often do we court temptations, and tamper with them, like the fly about the candle till its wings be burnt? How often do we grieve his spirit, and cleave to our idols, over the belly of warnings? What wonder he say, ‘ Ephraim is joined to idols : let him alone?’ Hos. iv. 17.

5. That we are not able of ourselves to stand against temptation, but if once we be engaged, we are fair to be foiled, Rom. vii. 23, 24. And so much the more unable are we, that presumption and self-confidence is our ordinary plague in this case. So that there is much need of fear, and trembling when entering into temptation, lest we come foul off.

6. *Lastly*, That it is the duty of all, and the disposition of the people of God, to desire they may be kept from engaging with temptations, as with an enemy too strong for them, Matth. xxvi. 42. ‘ Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.’ It is their souls desire that God would restrain Satan, 2 Cor. xii. 8 ; subdue their lusts, Psal. cxix. 133 ; and over-rule all in this evil world, as they may be kept from the evil of it, John xvii. 15.

I shall conclude this first part of the petition with a few inferences.

*Inf.* 1. Trials and persecutions, though God may bring good out of them, are not to be desired, but the averting of them prayed for. For they are sharp temptations to sin, wherein though God is much honoured by some, he is much dishonoured by many, Matth. 13. 21. forecited, compared with Luké viii. 13. ‘ They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy ; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.’ And they that desire them are much of the temper of those disciples who would have prayed down fire from heaven, when they knew not what spirit they were of. The desire of them is downright contradictory to this petition ; for the language of it is, *Lord, lead us into temptation.*

2. To run into temptation, cannot be from God’s Spirit, but from Satan, and a corrupt, blind, and presumptuous heart. For it is a running into that which we should beg of God that he would not lead us into. If a man be called of God into a place where he is beset with temptations, he may look for grace to be kept up against them, because he is in God’s way, and where he has his call to be, Psal. xci. 11.



‘For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.’ See 1 Kings xviii. 3. Obadiah was the governor of the house of Ahab, an idolatrous prince. But it is observed of him, that ‘he feared the Lord greatly,’ even in such a corrupt court. But where a man steps in among temptations without a call from God, he cannot expect such grace to be vouchsafed him. This rashness, self-confidence, and curiosity has cost dear to many.

3. ‘Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,’ Matth. xxvi. 41. Praying without watching is a tempting of God : watching without praying is a contempt of God and his grace. There is need to watch, for our enemies are ever lying at the catch, and they are ready to steal a dint of us when we are not aware ; and we cannot expect God’s help, but when we are in the way of duty. There is need to pray ; for watch as we will, our enemies are too strong for us, if the Lord himself do not second us. We must have new supplies of grace, from the grace in Christ Jesus, if we would stand. What then God has joined, put not ye asunder.

The SECOND part of this petition is for assisting grace, *But deliver us from evil.* Here I shall shew,

1. What is meant by *evil*.
2. What by *deliverance* from it.
3. What is the import of this part of the petition.

*First*, What is meant by *evil* ? By *evil* is meant,

1. Sin, which is the greatest of evils, the worst of evils, and the cause of all other evils, Amos v. 15. ‘Hate the evil.’ There is no good in sin, it is an only evil. What makes the devil evil, the world evil, and the heart evil, but sin ? Strip them of sin, and there would be no evil in them.
2. Temptation to sin, or whatsoever draws the soul to sin ; that is, ‘the evil of the world,’ John xvii. 15. The soul-ruining snare that is in any thing, is the evil of it. For as sin is evil, so every thing that has a native tendency to draw into sin is evil.

*Secondly*, What is meant by *deliverance* from *evil* ? It stands in two things.

1. To be brought out of it, by way of recovery when fallen into it, Psal. li. 12. Temptation may get the child of God down, his foot may be fast in the snare, and he needs an omnipotent hand to rid him out of Satan’s net.

2. To be kept from it, that he fall not into it again. The snares are so many, that it is hard to stand; there is need of a divine power to keep back the sinner's soul from the pit of sin, Jude 14. to take part with him when engaged with a temptation.

*Thirdly*, What is the import of this part of the petition? We may take it up in these three things.

1. There is no escaping of temptation, in greater or lesser measure, while we are in this world. Though we should watch ever so narrowly, so as not to cast ourselves into temptation; though by no special providence we be led into temptation, yet the heart within is so full of corruption, the world without is so full of snares, and Satan goes so constantly about, that we are in danger every where, and no where safe.

In prosperity we are apt to be proud, vain, carnal, secure; to forget God, and grow tasteless of heavenly things, &c. In adversity, we are impatient, and discontented, and fretting, and dead to good things, Psal. cxix. 107. In company we are apt to be infected, or to infect others; and in solitude to become a prey to the tempter. House nor field, bed nor board, civil duties nor religious duties, are not such, but temptations will haunt us at them.

2. God's children would fain be delivered from evil, from sin and temptation to it, Rom. vii. 24. 'O wretched man that I am!' says Paul, 'who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' The new nature in them makes them long and groan for it, as ever the captive exile longs for deliverance from his captivity. And there is a threefold deliverance which their souls desire here,

(1.) A deliverance in temptation, that God would powerfully support and enable them to stand in the hour of temptation, 2 Cor. xii. 8; that when they are engaged in the battle with Satan, the world, and the flesh, the Lord himself would come in for their rescue. They see they are not man enough for their enemies; and they would fain have Heaven to interpose, and cast the balance of victory to their side.

(2.) A deliverance under temptation, Psal. li. 8. Sometimes they are trod under foot by their lusts and passions; they are lying in the mire, and cannot get out. But they look again towards the Lord, as Jonah out of the whale's belly, that he would afford them his helping hand, and so sanctify their lot to them, as all may work for their good.

(3.) A deliverance completely from all sin, and temptation to it, Rom. vii. 24. forecited. And thus the petitions of this prayer end with a longing cry for perfect freedom from sin in another world. And this good the Lord brings out of the hard handling which his people get here, that thereby they are made to long for heaven.

3. They believe that God, and he only, can deliver them from evil. Without this faith they could not put up this petition; but the belief of the power and willingness of God to grant this deliverance to his people, daily excites them to cry unto him. *Deliver us from evil.*

I shall conclude this part of the sixth petition with a few inferences.

*Inf.* 1. Sinning is more terrible than suffering, in the eyes of the children of God. They pray to be delivered from sin absolutely, at any rate, cost what it will. And they have good reason for it; for there is more evil in the least sin than in the greatest suffering. In sinning we are conformed to the devil, but in suffering to Jesus Christ. Let us then cry earnestly to God, that he may *deliver us from evil.*

2. It is a black mark of one that belongs not to God, when there is no parting betwixt him and his lusts. The word and providence works to the delivering the man from his sin, but he will not part with it; he is not content to let it go, It is not the spot of God's children.

3. A careless, fearless way of going through the world, without daily care of being ensnared into sin, is an evidence that the man is at home, and is not travelling Zion-ward. For those who are going through this world as a wilderness, are walking with fear and trembling through it, still saying, Lord, *lead us not into temptation.*

4. *Lastly,* It is in the nature of all God's children, to desire to be home. *Our Father which art in heaven,—deliver us from evil.* They know that this will never be completely and fully answered till they be beyond the clouds: but from their hearts they desire it. Let us evidence ourselves to be the children of God, by our ardent desires for this complete deliverance from sin.



THE CONCLUSION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

MATTH. vi. 13.—*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen.*

**W**E come now to the conclusion of the Lord's prayer, which teacheth us, 'to take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory to him. And in testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard, we say, Amen.'

In this conclusion three things are to be considered.

- I. The connection thereof with the petitions.
- II. The concluding sentence.
- III. The concluding word.
- IV. I shall deduce some inferences.

I. Let us consider the connection of this conclusion with the petitions in the particle *for*; which shews it to contain arguments to be used in prayer for hearing: *q. d.* Lord, hear us, for the kingdom is thine, the power is thine, and the glory is thine; and teaches us, that when we pray, we should plead and pray, press our prayers, and enforce our petitions, with arguments and reasons, to be heard. I shall shew you,

1. The truth of it.
2. The reason of it.

*First*, I shall shew you the truth of this pleading. And that it is so, appears from,

1. The Lord himself's teaching us so to do, which shews it to be acceptable to him, since he himself directs us to it. We have the Mediator's direction for it in this pattern of prayer, petition 5. and conclusion. See also Luke xi. 5,—9. And the more of the Spirit that one has in prayer, he will have his mouth the more filled with arguments.

2. The practice of the saints. See how Moses pleads and reasons with God in prayer, Exod. xxxii. 11,—13. 'Lord why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou

hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, for mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of, will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.' See also how Asa pleads, 2 Chron. xiv. 11. 'Lord it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude: O Lord, thou art our God, let not man prevail against thee.' Job thought it a good way of praying, and longed to be at it, Job xxiii. 4. 'I would fill my mouth with arguments,' says he. The woman of Canaan recovered her arguments, when they seemed to be answered, Matth. xv. 22,—27. 'Have mercy on me,' says she, 'O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.'

3. The nature of the thing. In prayer men are upon business of the greatest weight, and outmost necessity, and should be in deep earnest in it; and ordinarily the Lord does not answer but to importunity. Is it not very natural in such a case to plead? Yea, what case can men be in that requires more importunate pleading, than that which relates to God's glory, and their everlasting felicity?

*Secondly*, I come to shew the reason of this pleading, why we should do so.

1. It is not to move, persuade, or bring over the Lord, to give us what we desire. Force of argument may prevail with man to change his mind, but the unchangeable God cannot be turned about with any reason or thing whatsoever. For

‘with him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,’ Jam. i. 17. ‘He is in one mind, and who can turn him?’ Job xxiii. 13.

2. But it is to exercise and strengthen our own praying graces, faith and fervency, &c. So that the effect of the pleading is on ourselves, not on God, though the consequent of it, by the divine purpose, is prevailing in prayer. It is true, the design of the pleading person is not on himself, though the effect is; neither ought it to be upon God, to move him, but upon the thing itself, to lay it out before the Lord, in the necessity and reasonableness of it. It is as if a hungry child should apply to his father for bread and the father should say, ‘Child, wherefore should I give you bread?’ and thereupon the child should say, ‘Alas! I am pained with hunger, and who will give it me if you refuse? will it not be a reflection on your name, to say your children faint for lack of bread?’ While the child pleads thus, the tear strikes in his eye, and his earnestness increases: whereupon he is answered. Here it is evident, that the effect of the pleading is not on the father; it would be but the child’s weakness to think that the father is overcome with his arguments, though the consequent of the pleading is the child’s getting bread: But the effect of it is plainly on the child himself, though the child designs it not so; And suppose the child to have so much wit, as to know that his arguments are not needed to persuade his father, his design of pleading in that case is on the thing itself, to hold out the necessity and reasonableness of it.

II. Let us consider the concluding sentence, *Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever.* Here I shall shew,

1. What is meant by *the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever.*

2. What is the import of this sentence.

FIRST, I am to shew what is meant by *the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever.*

1. By the *kingdom* is meant, not the kingdom of grace, nor the kingdom of glory either; but God’s essential kingdom, his universal sovereignty over all persons and all things whatsoever.

2. The *power* is not authority whereby God may do, but



the ability whereby he can do what he will, in that kingdom.

3. The *glory* is not God's essential glory, but the declarative glory, arising from what he doth in that kingdom, which will shine forth for ever through eternity.

SECONDLY, I am to shew, what is the import of this sentence. It is twofold, praise, and pleading arguments.

*First*, Praise. Hereby we praise him in our prayers, expressing high and honourable thoughts of him: *Thine is the kingdom, &c.* Thus we exalt him above ourselves, and all creatures whatsoever.

1. As the universal and absolute Monarch of all the creation, and the only one, 1 Chron. xxix. 11. 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in heaven and in the earth, is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.' Universal and absolute sovereignty are the flowers of the imperial crown of heaven, and belong to no other. They are many kings on earth, but they are all limited monarchs, and vassals to the King of heaven, who can have no competitor: *Lord, thine is the kingdom.*

2. As the Omnipotent, and only Omnipotent, *ibid.* The power of men and angels is but a shadow of power, weakness in comparison with God's. None of them all are capable to do what they are capable to will. But his power and will are of equal extent.

3. As the chief end of all things, *ibid.* and the only chief end. It is the peculiar prerogative of God to say, 'For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it,' Isa. xlviii. 11. All persons and things are for God, God is for himself; and the glory of all redounds to him, and will do for evermore.

This teaches us, That in our prayers we should praise God, as well as petition him. Praise is a comely mixture in all the parts of divine worship. It is most directly tending to God's honour; and it is the piece of worship that will last longest; when prayers, &c. are laid by in heaven, praise will be there for ever.

*Observ.* This pattern of prayer begins with praise, and ends with it too. For it is necessary, in the entrance, that we have our hearts awed with the divine glory, that so we may be the fitter to pray on: and in the end, that we may

carry away high thoughts of God, for the better regulating of our life, in the intervals of duty.

*Secondly*, Let us consider the pleading arguments in prayer: and they are all taken from God himself. *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever.*

*Observe.* This teaches us to take our encouragement from God only in prayer, to draw our arguments from the consideration of what God is. This is a large field to fill our mouths with arguments, and to furnish us with suitable pleas in prayer.

*Quest.* May we not plead with God upon any thing in ourselves? *Ans.* (1.) We may not plead upon any worthiness in ourselves or any other creature, Dan. ix. 18. 'We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.' 1 Tim. ii. 5 'For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.' (2.) Though in our pleading we may bring in both our evil and our good, yet the force of the plea or argument is not to be laid on either of them, but on something in God himself answerable thereto. David, brings in the greatness of his sin, in his plea for pardon; but the stress of the plea lies not there, but on God's own name, to be magnified greatly by the pardon of great sin, Psal. xxv. 11. 'For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity: for it is great.' Hezekiah brings in his upright walking in the plea for prolonging his life, Isa. xxxviii. 3. 'Remember now, O Lord,' says he, 'I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.' But the stress of it lay on God's faithfulness in that promise, 1 Kings viii. 25. 'Therefore now, Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David, my father, that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me, as thou hast walked before me.'

Now, the plea for hearing, here put in our mouths, is threefold.

1. The kingdom is the Lord's. The stress of the argument from this is, Therefore thou mayest do it, thou hast full authority to grant us whatsoever thou wilt, Matth. xx. 15. 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?'

2. The power is the Lord's. Therefore thou canst do whatsoever we ask, over the belly of all opposition, and however hopeless it be in itself, Eph. iii. 20. 'He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.'

3. The glory is the Lord's. Therefore thou wilt do it, since thou lovest thy glory, and wilt have glory for evermore from answering our petitions, Josh. vii. 9. 'What wilt thou not do unto thy great name?'

III. Let us consider the concluding word, *Amen*. It imports two things. (1.) Our desire to be heard, q. d. so be it, Rev. xxii. 20. 'Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.' And the believer uses this word properly as a testimony of his desire, when by faith he is enabled and emboldened to plead with God, that he would fulfil his requests, 2 Chron. xx. 6, 11. (2.) Our confidence and assurance that we shall be heard; q. d. so certainly it shall be, Rev. i. 7. 'Even so Amen.' And the sincere Christian uses the word with great propriety in the conclusion of his prayers, in testimony of his assurance to be heard, when he is by faith emboldened quietly to rest upon the Lord, that he will fulfil the desires of his heart, 2 Chron. xiv. 11.

I conclude all with a very few inferences.

*Inf.* 1. Be fervent and importunate with God in prayer, and set yourselves to plead and pray, as men that are in the deepest earnest about a thing on which their highest interests are suspended, Jam. v. 16. If earnestness and importunity are any where required, here they are highly, nay, absolutely requisite.

2. Let not complaints jostle out praises from your prayers, but still remember that every day affords you as much matter of praise as of request. God's mercies are new every morning; let therefore the sacrifice of praise be a part of the daily sacrifice ye offer unto God. Never bow a knee unto God for supplicating a mercy from him, without praising him for what mercies ye enjoy. This is a very promising way of obtaining the requests ye make at the throne of grace in the confidence of faith.

3. Deeply consider what a God he is with whom you have to do, to fill your mouth with arguments. Pleas in prayer may be fetched, and faith will fetch them, from every divine



attribute and perfection; and faith will improve these pleas in such a manner as to procure the good things it applies to the throne for. 'What wilt thou not do unto thy great name?' is a standing plea for faith, which can never be rejected. Mercy, holiness, justice, truth, &c. all magnified by the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, will be never-failing pleas in the mouth of the prayer of faith.

4. *Lastly*, Use not Amen superficially at the end of your prayers, but with earnestness and faith. As for those who think it superstition to say *Amen*, they are ignorant of the word of God; and I would recommend to them to consult their Bible and Catechism, in order to cure them of that senseless conceit.

And thus, by the good hand of God upon me, I have finished what I intended by way of illustration of the great doctrines of the Christian religion, with respect to faith and practice, as compendized, from the Holy Scriptures, in our Shorter Catechism. I am sensible of many defects in the prosecution of such a large work; for who is sufficient for these things? but I have endeavoured, according to the measure of grace given unto me, to declare unto you what I am persuaded is truth, agreeable to the word of God, the rule and standard of all religious truth. And I would now ask you, What entertainment have ye given to the great and important truths laid before you, from the Lord's word, in the course of these sermons, in which I have been engaged a considerable part of several years? Do ye now believe? Have ye embraced these doctrines with a divine faith, a faith of the operation of God? have ye received the truths into your hearts? and are your hearts moulded into the image of them? Are they become the food and nourishment of your souls, so as ye are made to esteem them more than the food that is necessary for the support of your natural life? Are they written on your hearts, and impressed on your consciences, so as to become an effective principle of new obedience? Is the effect of them the sanctification of your hearts and lives? and is the result of the whole an earnest desire to know the truth more fully and clearly, and to regulate every motion and desire of your hearts, every word of your mouths, and every action of your lives, by the truth, so as ye may be enabled through grace to do the whole will of God? If

these catechetical discourses have not produced some such effects upon you, or any of you, alas ! they have been all lost as to any saving benefit to your souls, and will be a swift and terrible witness against you in the day of the Lord Jesus. O, Sirs ! consider, bethink yourselves, recollect the great and important truths I have been laying before you, drawn from the pure and uncorrupted fountain of the Lord's word, and let them have a suitable and lasting influence on your hearts and lives. If ye imprison the truth, and hold it in unrighteousness, by resisting and opposing its effect, which is sanctification, John xvii. 17. and refusing to let it rule over you, and raising up your lusts against it, and so unrighteously smothering and suppressing it, ye do so at a terrible risk : ' For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness,' Rom. i. 18. It is very probable that many of you at least have acquired more knowledge of the principles of religion, than ye had formerly ; and I am obliged to own, that your knowledge of the truths thereof is as much generally, as ever I observed in other places. But is it sanctifying saving knowledge, or only merely speculative, floating in your heads, without having a due and efficacious influence upon your hearts ? Alas ! I must say, that truth is held prisoner with a witness among us, and that our lives are not answerable to our light, and I am much afraid it bring wrath on the place. I therefore earnestly beseech and exhort one and all of you, to study to know the truth as it is in Jesus, to have a heart experimental knowledge thereof, a real feeling and sensation of the sweetness, virtue, and excellency thereof, in your minds, so as ye may taste indeed that the Lord is good. This knowledge alone will be available to your salvation, while all other knowledge is quite useless and unprofitable as to any salutary effect. For says our Lord, John xvii. 3. ' This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' But the further pressing of this experimental knowledge of Christ, I must defer to another occasion, with which I shall conclude this work.

A DISCOURSE ON THE EXPERIMENTAL KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

PHIL. iii. 10.—*That I may know him.*—

**A** MERE speculative knowledge of Christ, and of the great doctrines of the gospel, however laboriously acquired and extensive it may be, is of small importance in itself, and quite vain and ineffectual, if it be not sanctified, and issue in an experimental knowledge of Christ, and a real feeling of the beauty, excellency, and efficacy of divine truth on the heart. A man may have a competent, nay, a very extensive acquaintance with the whole doctrines of the Christian religion, as laid down in the holy scriptures, and of which we have an excellent compend in the shorter Catechism, which I have been endeavouring to explain to you for a series of years; yet if you have not the experimental knowledge of Christ, all your knowledge is in vain as to the salvation of your souls. I therefore come, as a conclusion of the whole, to press this experimental knowledge upon you, as what alone will be available for any saving purposes.

In the preceding verse, the apostle speaks of the gain he received in Christianity in point of justification, flowing from the soul's closing with Christ, and renouncing all other; and here he speaks of that gain in point of sanctification. And first, more generally, *That I may know him.* Might not the Philippians hereupon have said, And do not you know Christ, who have preached him so long? There are two ways of knowing, one by hearing of a thing, another by sight and feeling; one by the relation of another, another by experience, as one knows honey, and all the virtues of it, by report, which he believes, another by tasting it himself. The apostle knew Christ by faith, when he first believed in him; and here he would have the spiritual feeling and experience of him, finding by experience him to be what he has heard and believed him to be. He had something of this, but he would still have more.

The doctrine arising from the text is,



DOCT. 'The experimental knowledge of Christ is the sum of practical religion,' 1 Cor. ii. 2. 'flowing from faith, to be studied by all.'

In handling this point I shall,

I. Shew what this experimental knowledge of Christ is.

II. Confirm the point.

III. Make application.

I. I am to shew what this experimental knowledge of Christ is. It is an inward and spiritual feeling of what we hear and believe concerning Christ and his truths, whereby answerable impressions are made on our souls, Psal. xxxiv. 8. like that of the Samaritans, John iv. 42. when they said unto the woman, 'Now, we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.' There is a savoury report of Christ spread in the gospel; faith believes it, and embraces him for what the word gives him out to be; and then the believing soul doth come and see. There is a glorious scheme of the lovely perfections of Christ drawn in the Bible, and faith believes that he really is what he is said to be; and then that scheme begins to be drawn over again in the Christian's experience, and this is always drawing more and more till he come to glory. It is just as if some eminent physician should give a friend remedies for all diseases he may be liable to; and when he leaves them with him, he lets him know that such a remedy is good for that distemper, and another is good for such another, &c. Now, he knows them all; but he falls sick, and he takes the remedy fit for his disease, and it proves ineffectual. Now, the man knows the remedy by experience, which he knew before by report only. Even so Christ is given as all in all to a believer, and he makes use of Christ for his case, and that is the experimental knowledge of him. I will illustrate this by some instances.

1. The scripture says of Christ, He is the way to the Father, John xiv. 6. Now, the man that has tried many ways of attaining access to God, and communion with him, and still is denied access, and can find no way to come to God, at length comes by Jesus Christ, renouncing all things else, leans only on his merit and intercession, and he finds an open door of access to God, and communion with him. The

flaming sword he finds removed, and him who was still before a consuming fire, he finds now a warming sun to his soul. Here is experimental knowledge of Christ. Hence the apostle says, Rom. v. 1, 2. 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.'

2. Christ's blood 'purgeth the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.' Heb. ix. 14. Now, the experimental Christian knows from experience, that unremoved and unrepented-of guilt defiles the conscience, leaves a sting in it, unfits him to serve the Lord, as much as a man in filthy rags is unfit to stand before a king: it breeds in the heart an unwillingness to come before God, and mars his confidence: he tries to repent, overlooking the blood of Christ, but it will not do. He looks to an absolute God, and his heart is indeed terrified, but nothing softened. At length he looks to God in Christ, throws the burden of his guilt, and dips his soul in the sea of Christ's blood; and then the heart melts for sin, the sting is taken out of the conscience, the soul is willing to converse with God, and is enabled to serve him, as a son doth a father.

3. Christ is fully satisfying to the soul, Psal. lxxiii. 25. Hab. iii. 17, 18. We all know this by report; but the Christian experimentally knows it by a spiritual sensation in the innermost parts of his soul. Sometimes, when all his enjoyments have been standing entire about him, he has looked with a holy contempt on them all, saying in his heart, These are not my portion. His heart has been loosed from them, and he has been made willing to part with them all for Christ, in whom his soul rejoiced, and in whom alone he was satisfied. Sometimes, again, all outward things have been going wrong with him, yet he could comfort, encourage, and satisfy himself in Christ, as David did in a great strait, 1 Sam. xxx. 6. He has gone away to his God and his Christ, and with Hannah returned with 'a countenance no more sad,' 1 Sam. i. 18.

4. Christ helps his people to bear afflictions, and keeps them from sinking under them; and he lifts up their heads when they go through these waters, Isa. xliii. 2. Now, the Christian meets with affliction; and he takes a good lift of his own burden, for it is the thing he thinks he may well

bear. But his burden is too heavy for him. He wrestles with it : but the more he wrestles, it grows the heavier, and he sinks the more. At length he goes to Christ, saying, ‘ Lord, I thought to have borne this burden, but I am not man for it ; I will sink under it, if I get not help : ’ ‘ Master save us, for we perish. ’ And so he lays it over on the great Burden-bearer, and he is helped, Psal. xxviii. 7. Now, the man, when he thought he could do all, could do nothing ; and when he thinks he can do nothing, he can do all, 2 Cor. viii. 9, 10.

5. Christ is made unto us ‘ wisdom,’ 1 Cor. i. 30. The experimental Christian finds, that when he leans to his own understanding, he mistakes his way at mid-day ; and all that he reaps of it, is, that in end he has himself to call ‘ beast ’ and ‘ fool ’ for his error. But when he comes into difficulties, that he sees he knows not how to extricate himself out of, and is wary, and lays out his case before the Lord, and gives himself up as a blind man to be led by the Lord, he finds he is conducted in the way he knew not ; and the result is, to ‘ bless the Lord who has given him counsel. ’

6. *Lastly*, Christ is made unto us ‘ sanctification,’ 1 Cor. i. 30. Now, the Christian falls secure, does not make use of Christ, and then ere ever he is aware, he is like Samson without his hair. When he awakens, he sees his case is all gone to wrack, the course of sanctifying influences is stopt, the graces are lying in the dead thrav, and lusts are strong and rampant. He falls a grappling with them, but is worsted still ; until he come to himself, and acknowledge his utter weakness to stand in this battle, and renew the actings of faith in Christ ; and then ‘ out of weakness he is made strong, waxes valiant in fight, and turns to flight the armies of the aliens,’ Heb. xi. 34. He flings down the confidence in himself, like the broken reed that has pierced his hand ; and though the promise lie before him, like the rod turned into a serpent, which unbelief tells him he would be too bold to meddle with, he ventures and takes the serpent by the tail, and it becomes the rod of God in his hand.

Let these suffice for examples of experimental religion.

II. I proceed to confirm the point ; or to shew, that the experimental knowledge of Christ is the sum of practical religion. Consider,



1. The scripture-testimonies concerning this. To learn religion in the power of it, and in all the parts of sanctification, is to learn Christ. Hence the apostle says, Eph. iv. 20, —24. “But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts: and be renewed in the Spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created, in righteousness and true holiness.” There needs no more to be known, for that comprehends all, 1 Cor. ii. 2. ‘I determined not to know any thing among you,’ says Paul, ‘save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.’ It is ‘eternal life,’ John xvii. 3. It is a pledge of eternal life; it is eternal life begun. Yea, Christ is the sum and substance of a believer’s life, Phil. i. 21. ‘To me to live is Christ.’

2. All true religion is the creature’s conformity or likeness to God, made by virtue of divine influences, transforming the soul into the divine image. Now, there can be no conformity to God but through Jesus Christ; for he is the only channel of the conveyance of divine influences, and God can have no communication with sinners but through him. He alone makes us partakers of the divine nature, 2 Cor. iv. 6.

3. Whatever religion or holiness a man seem to have, that doth not come and is maintained this way, is not of the right sort. It is but nature varnished over: for ‘he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father.’

The soul’s closing with Christ by faith, opens the way to this experimental knowledge of him; so that whosoever would know Christ thus, must in the first place so close with him.

(1.) Faith closing with Christ, believes he is such an one as he is held out in the gospel, gives credit to the report; and it is the want of this that mars this knowledge, Isa. liii. 1.

(2.) Faith closes with Christ to that very end, that the soul may so know him. The soul stands in need of Christ in all that wherein he is held out as useful to a sinner, and faith takes him for that.

(3.) Faith unites the soul to Christ, and so makes way for this knowledge, which is the happy result of this union.

I come now to a word of improvement, which I shall dis-

cuss in an use of exhortation. O Sirs ! labour to be experimental Christians, to have the inward feeling of what you hear and say ye believe concerning Christ. Why will ye stand in the outer court all your days ? Come forward, and dip into the heart of religion. Come in where the world's ungracious feet could never carry them. And be not satisfied with less of religion, than what the beloved disciple in the name of believers says he felt, ' Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,' 1 John i. 3. This is a weighty and seasonable point. To enforce this exhortation, I offer the following motives.

1. Religion is not a matter of mere speculation to satisfy men's curiosity, but a matter of practice. Men's eternal state lies at the stake, which can never be brought to a comfortable issue by a speculative knowledge, more than a man can be cured by the knowledge of a remedy, without application of it. An unexperimental professor is like a foolish sick man, who entertains those about him with fine discourses of the nature of medicines, but in the mean time he is dying himself for want of application of them.

2. The sweet of religion lies in the experience of it : hence the Psalmist says, ' My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, Psal. lxiii. 5. No man can have the idea of the sweetness of honey like him that tastes it, nor of religion like him that feels the power of it. One reads the word, and it is tasteless to him ; to another it is sweeter than the honeycomb ; why, because he feels the power of it on his spirit, Psal. xix. 11. Religion would not be such a burden to us as it is, if we could by experience carry it beyond dry sapless notions : it would be a reward to itself, and so chain the heart to it.

3. All the profit of religion to ourselves lies in the experience of it, Matth. vii. 22. What avails all the religion men have in their heads, while it never sinks into the heart ? Knowledge without experience will no more sanctify a man, then painted fire will burn, or the bare sight of water will wash. Ah ! what avails that knowledge to a man, by which he is never a whit more holy, nor less a slave to his lusts ? True, it may do good to others, as the profit of the carpenters gift came to Noah, while they themselves perished in the deluge. Light without heat serves only to shew the way to hell, where there is scorching heat without light. Gifts

without grace are like a ship without ballast in a boisterous sea, that cannot miss to sink. And when such an one is sinking into hell, his gifts will be like a bag of gold on a drowning man, precious in itself, but will only help to sink him the faster.

4. The experimental Christian is the only Christian whose religion will bring him to heaven. Heaven in effect is but a perfect experimental knowledge of Christ, where the saints will for ever feed upon that sweetness they have heard to be in him. And there is no attaining of heaven, unless men first begin on earth to know Christ thus.

5. *Lastly*, It is absolutely necessary to qualify a man to go on and hold right in an evil time. And surely, if ever there was need for it, there is need now.

(1.) The experimental Christian is fitted thereby to suffer for Christ, because he has the testimony within himself, that the way which the world persecutes is the way of God. No arguments give such a certainty of the truth of religion as experience does.

(2.) When wickedness prospers, and piety is oppressed, experimental religion keeps a man from being led away with the error of the wicked, Mal. iii. 16.

(3.) When many stumbling-blocks are laid in the way, especially in divisions and church-contentions, which make many wicked men think there is no reality in religion at all; yet the righteous, in such a time, shall hold on his way.

This is a very weighty point; and to illustrate it a little further, I will,

1. Give evidence that experimental religion is very rare.

2. Point out some causes of it.

3. Shew how it may be obtained.

4. Press you to seek after it by some considerations.

*First*, I am to give evidences that experimental religion is very rare in our day.

1. The little relish that men have of the word either preached or read. Experience makes the word savoury; hence David says ‘I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil,’ Psal. cxix. 162. How many are there to whom the word is tasteless as the white of an egg? Their fancy may be tickled by the discovery of something which they knew not before: but, alas! they have no inward sensation of the thing wrapt up in the words of truth.



2. The little knowledge of the word by experience. The best commentary on the ill of the heart is the word; and the best commentary on the word is experience. These reflect light one upon another. The experimental Christian reads his heart in the word; he gets it opened and anatomised there, Heb. iv. 12, 13. It is the looking-glass wherein he sees it. And he understands the word by experience, John ii. 17. and vii. 16. The doctrine of truth is according to godliness, and godliness, in the practice of it, makes truth shine the more into the soul.

3. The little precise and nice walking there is among professors, Eph. v. 14. Christians should 'walk circumspectly;' and it is the native effect of experimental religion, Isa. xxxviii. 15. And the reason is plain: The experimental Christian finds how a wrong step will provoke the Spirit to depart, and how communion with God cannot be kept up in a loose and irregular way, Psal. lxvi. 18. He sees how small a thing exposeth to the dint of the threatening; and that the way of getting the promise told out to him, is the way of tender walking, which counts no sin little. But, alas! for that miserable latitude that prevails in the walk of the generation, who take such a woful liberty in their words and actions, as we may say with the prophet, Mic. vii. 1, 2. 'Wo is me, for I am as when they have gathered the summer-fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first-ripe fruit. The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood: they hunt every man his brother with a net.'

4. The little advantage religion has by the conferences of professors. People may go into many companies ere they get one from whence they may come forth with a heart more inflamed with love to God and Christ, and the practice of godliness, because they can meet with few like him who said, 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul,' Psal. lxvi. 16. Alas! there is little of heaven in the converse of Christians at this day; which says there is but little of it in their hearts. We have sat down on time's things; and as for the matters of another world, we have little relish of them. A philosopher bade one speak, that he might see him, Col. iii. 16.

5. *Lastly*, The general security that prevails among all ranks,

though we never saw the day wherein it was more unseasonable. Did experimental religion prevail, we would be waiting on the Lord in the way of his judgments, as the church did, Isa. xxvi. 8, 20. God help us! Scotland's stroke seems to be walking in the dark, with feet of wool, that we will never hear the sound of, till we feel its iron hands. It is very like some fearful surprise is abiding us. The dispensations of our day are in their own nature rousing dispensations; but we are not at all awakened by them, more than we were when there was not a pin in our tabernacle loosed. There are different opinions and practices in these matters; but whose heads soever are rightest, we think the hearts of all parties are wrong. And among all our unhappy differences, we have a more unhappy agreement in a spirit of slumber that has seized all together. And what shall be the end of these things?

*Secondly*, I shall point out some of the causes of the scarcity of experimental religion.

1. The Lord has a controversy with our mother, and therefore has withdrawn, and it fares the worse with the children. She was some time Hephzibah, and her land Beulah; but now her gold is become dross, and her wine mixed with water. She has forgotten her husband, and has been gadding after other lovers. She hath cast herself into a loathsome disease; her kindly heat and warmth is gone; any thing of it that is left has struck out to the outward parts, leaving a key-cold heart within. And, by all appearance, she will not be cured, till blood be let of her.

2. People's spiritual senses are dulled with the luscious sweets of a present world. Farms and merchandise take away people's appetites for the marriage-supper, Matth. xxii. 4, 5. The devil makes birdlime of the things of the world to catch professors, that they find, when they would get upward, their feet stick in the mire. Many of us, I trow, when our worldly incomes were less, our spiritual incomes were more. Or, if the world go against people, their spirits are so embittered, that they find no sweetness at all in religion.

3. Religion is not made people's business, but just a by-hand work. Men are like the mole, whose abode is in the earth; and though sometimes it come above ground, it hastes in again to its hole, to be in its element. They will say their prayers indeed, evening and morning; but for walk-

ing with God in the interval of duties, they know nothing about it. Their religion is over when duties are over. They are like a man that takes physic indeed, but he just vomits it up again when he has got it, giving it no time to work, Gen. vi. 9. Religion's chance-customers will never grow rich by it.

4. People's not holding hand to any attainment they make in religion, like 'the slothful man, not roasting that which he took in hunting,' Prov. xii. 27. They are, it may be, at some pains to earn something in religion, but they put it in a bag with holes. Sometimes they are in a fair way to gain experience of religion, they get some taste of it, but then they do not follow on, Hos. vi. 3. The spark is kindled, but they let it go out; they do not feed it, and presently they have a cold coal to blow at again.

5. *Lastly*, Formality in religion, when people content themselves with outward worship, doing the work, but make it not their business to worship God in the spirit; by faith in him, love, dependence, fear, hope, patience, &c. It is these and the like graces that bring in the experimental knowledge of Christ and religion into the soul. These are they that get forward to God, even to his throne. And duties without them are useless and vain, like liquor that has lost all the spirits.

*Thirdly*, I come to shew, how we may become experimental Christians.

1. Let us labour to be Christians indeed, and lay the foundation well in a serious and sincere closing with Jesus Christ. That is to say, let us, under a conviction of the reality and necessity of religion, give away and consecrate ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us forsake the world for him, and look on ourselves as men bound to another world, under the conduct of the Captain of the Lord's hosts. And while we go through it with him, let us resolve to go lightly along, and uot dip, Cant. iv. 8. Let us forsake sin for him, and leave these husks to feed upon himself, for the manna will not fall till the Egyptian provision be done. And men need not think that the dainties of heaven will be brought to the table, where the soul is sitting at dust, which is the serpent's meat. Labour to know them no more, not to seek your satisfaction from them, and ye shall know Christ.

2. Receive the truths of the word by faith. If you would



be experimental Christians, let the word dwell in you richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.' Hear it, and read it attentively, and with application; meditate on it; let it be your constant companion and bosom-oracle, to which you may always resort for direction, caution, and encouragement. And ye will soon find the commandment is a light, and that by them ye are warned, and that the promises have a sweet accomplishment, in the way of duty, in the experience of the Christian. Labour to get the divine faith of the word. O, Sirs! it is not easy to believe scripture-truths, Luke xxiv. 25. Admit the conviction; look to the Lord for grace to believe, and keep up the struggle with unbelief.

3. Be diligent observers of your own way, the way of your heart and life. A man that lets his heart run at random, and does not review what passeth there, can never be an experimental Christian. But every serious review of the heart would give you a new experimental confirmation of scripture-truths. There are two great depths that the experimental Christian wades much in, viz. the depths of wickedness in the heart, and the depth of perfection and fulness in Christ. Be much in self-examination.

4. Be careful observers of providence; the providence of God towards the church, and towards yourselves in particular, Psal. cvii. ult. Providence is a river that brings down the rich ore of experiences, which are to be gathered by Christian observation. The Bible is the word that God preacheth to the world; and providence is the application of the doctrine. In the Bible, the word is brought to our ears, and in providence it is set before our eyes; though most of us are blind as moles, and see it not; but the experimental Christian doth see.

5. Lay it down for a conclusion, that religion is a thing that lies inwardly, and that it is quite another thing than a parcel of external performances; that it is a conforming of the soul to the image of Christ, by a close application to him, and a real participation of his Spirit, and virtue of his blood. And therefore seek that, and seek it on till ye find his truth comes not into your heart in word only, but in power, gradually killing sin and self, and conforming you more to his image. And go not to duties as one that is only to hear or speak, but to feel or taste. And when your hand is once in,

that ye begin to taste how gracious the Lord is, hold hand to it, and ye shall find his going forth prepared as the morning.

*Fourthly*, I conclude with some considerations to stir you up to this exercise.

1. Experimental religion is a sort of heaven on earth. Heaven is the eternal feeling of that goodness which is in God the chief good. It is his eternal pouring out of his goodness into the souls of his people, making them drink of those rivers which they heard were at his right hand. Now, ye may begin it here with tasting of the word of life. That will make great delight, as the full enjoyment makes perfect joy there.

2. There are none who being capable of that enjoyment on earth, that get the first taste of it in heaven. No; they all begin it here, John xvii. 3. For God first gives men a taste in Christian experience, and then they desire the full enjoyment of it, and they get it in heaven. And this is the reasonable way with the rational creature. Whosoever taste not here, shall not drink above.

3. The experimental Christian has the counterpart of the Bible in his breast, though imperfect. He has things old and new to bring out of his treasure, that answer to scripture doctrines and promises, as the copy to the original. The experimental Christian is a walking Bible: He has a body of divinity formed of experiences, which is an excellent sort of learning, a thousand times preferable to all the raw unfelt notions of noisy professors, that are like the sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

4. The experimental Christian is fit to sail to heaven, whatever wind be blowing; for he has both sail and ballast. He has experienced of the goodness and faithfulness of God, and of the sanctifying power of truth; that is sail that will carry him through in all storms: and he has experience of the corruption of his own nature, the deceit of his own heart, and of his own pitiful weakness; and that will be ballast to him. For want of these in time of trial, few get through.

(1.) It is very hard, without experience of religion, to stand in a time when the proud contemners of God seem to be most happy: when the sun shines bright on the way of wickedness and apostasy from God, and nothing but clouds and darkness appear in the way of holiness, Mal. iii. 15, 16:

It is strange if those who never felt more sweetness in religion than in the world, do not at such a time turn their back on it altogether : but the experimental Christian will not do so : for ‘ the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger,’ Job. xvii. 9.

(2.) When the night of error overtakes a church, and errors like locusts swarm abroad, how hard is it then to stand without experience ! 2 Thess. ii. 10. Where truth sinks not into the heart, but floats in the head, it makes itching ears, to which novelties have easy access. They to whom old truths are unsavoury, lie a prey to new notions. And hence it has come to pass, that many noted professors have been carried away in such a time. But he that has tasted of the power of truth, will say from his experience, ‘ The old is better,’ Luke v. ult.

(3.) When divisions enter into a church, it is hard to keep right without experimental religion. Division is a great plague from the Lord, a stain on the beauty of the church, and a dreadful snare to men. When church-builders are like Babel-builders, how can the work thrive ? It turns some quite off from all religion ; while they see one going one way, and another another way, they know not whom to follow, and they cast off all together. Others, whose religion was never so deep as the bottom of their hearts ; exhaust the whole of their vigour on the controverted points, and so they become dead in the vitals of godliness. So that, unless people be experimental Christians, and exercised to godliness too in the time, having the ballast I spoke of before, they will run into terrible excess of selfishness, judging not only practices, but hearts : a very unchristian employment !

(4.) When great men and good men are falling, how hard is it to stand, unless men have a witness to the truth from within ? God, in his holy providence, for the further trial of men permits the fall of men of name for gifts and piety : And when these fall, readily they fall not alone, but as mighty oaks break down others about them, unless they be well rooted and grounded. And therefore they will never bring their religion to a good account, whose religion is only to do as others do.

(5.) *Lastly*, When it comes to hard and sharp personal persecution, especially to resisting unto blood. When extreme hardships, even death itself, are laid in the balance



with an unfelt religion, it is hard to think how one should stand who has had no experience of the power of it. Should God give us up into the hands of a bloody antichristian enemy, it would not be hard for them that have not been sealed by the Spirit, to refuse the mark of the beast.

But I shall give more particular directions towards attaining experimental religion.

1. Fix your eyes on the particular evils of your heart and life, and ply closely the reformation of them by the Spirit. Alas! what are we doing in the way of mortification of sin? Experimental religion is a dying to sin, by virtue of our union with Christ. What use have we for Christ, if not to 'save us from our sins?' Matth. i. 21. But the use many make of Christ is to save them and their sins. They will drink, swear, lie, cheat, and do unjustly still, and they will call these infirmities, or very little things, that need not disturb a man; and they will lick themselves whole with their believing; and on a new temptation go just back again to them. Sirs, this is to make Christ the minister of sin, and to sin because grace abounds. The running the round between swearing and confessing, will make men fall down at length into the pit, whence they will never rise again, Prov. xxix. 1. If Christ cure thee not of thy disease, thou wilt never get life by him.

Therefore, I say, ply reformation of heart and life closely. It will not be wishing that will do it; ye must put your hand to the work. It will cost mourning groans under the weight of sin, believing looks, and vigorous endeavours against it. Is there a thing that is your weak side? pray remember thy soul is at stake; if it overcome thee, thy soul is gone; and if ever thou see heaven, thou must get above it, Matth. v. 29. Rev. iii. 21. O mind that passage, Mark x. 21. 'One thing thou lackest,' &c. Look to thy spots in the glass of the law, and quickly set about purging of them. Thou hast, may be, a carnal worldly heart: fall on to get it spiritual and heavenly; an ill tongue, get it bridled: or an offensive carriage, get it mended.

2. Continue at the work, for the victory is not got but by degrees. The interruptions that take place in our plying the work of religion, make it still the more difficult. The miserable halts we make in the exercise of godliness, do but weaken us, and give the enemy more time to recruit. And

they that cannot digest the making religion their business, are not for heaven. Heaven is an eternal triumph; how can they be capable of it then that make it not their business to fight, or that are always overcome, instead of being overcomers? It is a rest, therefore it presupposeth a labour; not so much the toil of business in the world, for the most carnal have as much of that as professors, but a rest from labour against sin.

3. Take often notice what progress ye are making. Consider with yourselves, Have I got any more victory over my passions, my lusts, and my prevailing iniquity? Is there a cubit added to my spiritual stature? Am I going backward or forward? Sirs, people that are at pains with a farm, they count their profit, to see whether they be winners or losers: if any thing has been mismanaged to their loss, they endeavour to mend it the next time; and if they find they are gainers, they are encouraged to redouble their pains. But, alas! what pains men are at about religion, is bestowed on it as if they cared not whether it prospered or not; and therefore they have no experience.

4. Look after the profit of duties. We should never hear a sermon, but should inquire, when we have come from it Now, what have I made of this? where did it touch me? what evil of my heart has it discovered? what influence has it had on me to fit me more for my journey and work? Sermons are not easy to some of you, that are far off from the place of public worship: ye would think it a great deal to go one mile, or two, three, four, or five miles in vain, in other cases. Look after your prayers, as the Psalmist did, Psal. v. 3. Ye would think it much if ye were to ask a request of your neighbour, and yet get no answer, or a refusal. O why then do ye not consider how your prayers are accepted by the prayer-hearing God? I assure you, if ye would fall upon this way, ye would soon find the good of it.

5. Converse with experimental Christians about experimental religion. There is a wonderful diffidence that professors have in one another at this day, Matth. xxiv. 12. I verily believe this would be a good way to cure it, if those that have any experience of religion would modestly bring it forth to the edification of others. There is nothing that more endears Christians one to another than this. It is an unchristian-like thing in professors to despise converse about

practical godliness and Christian experience. And there is more of the wisdom of the serpent than the harmlessness of the dove, in people's locking up in their own breasts all their sense of practical godliness, when it might be brought forth to the glory of God, and the good of others. I believe this way has been the cause of so much jealousy, suspicion, and division among professors; and has run out all Christian conference into vain jangling about the controversies of the time.

6. Be very nice as to the point of sin and duty, Psal. cxxxiii. 2. Sudden resolutions in matters which will allow deliberation, are often to be suspected. Sometimes the matter of sin and duty is of that nature, that there is no time to deliberate; all that can be done is, to look to the Lord for immediate clearness, and the Christian shall have it, Prov. iv. 12. 'When thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.' Compare Matth. x. 19. 'But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.' Sometimes the Christian may have time to deliberate, and then God's ordinary way is to clear men step by step, Prov. 10. 12. 'When thou goest thy steps shall not be straitened. Say not, the way is plain at first glance in this case; for the Spirit of God bids thee 'ponder the path of thy feet,' Prov. iv. 26. If a way be such as our own heart at the very first inclines to, I say it ought the rather to be narrowly examined, seeing in scripture-language the way of our own heart is of no good name. And suppose the inclination of the man's heart does really fall upon the right side in this case, yet this is no Christian resolution, but a stumbling on the right way, which God will never accept. Therefore men that would act as Christians in the point of sin and duty, should lay aside prejudices, trample their inclinations under foot, lay the matter before the Lord, and themselves open to conviction there, as a piece of clean paper, on which God may write what he sees meet, pondering all things with a holy jealousy over their own hearts, lest they be biassed by their own inclinations and preconceived opinions. I am sure much of God is to be found in this way.

7. Acknowledge God more in your temporal concerns, Prov. iii. 6. Are we Christians? let us depend on God for all things in this life and the other. We are directed to pray



about them, the promises are about them, and therefore we should wait on God for them. Many a sweet experience have the saints got in temporal things, when they have been helped to lay them before the Lord, and leave them there without anxiety, in the use of the means.

8. *Lastly*, Have a precise respect to all the commands of God, and be truly strict in your lives; that is, deal with men as believing God's eye is upon you, and with God as if the eyes of men were upon you. Never look on the authority of the multitude as sufficient to make that no fault, which will not abide strict examination by the word of God. Let the command of God prevail with you; and whatsoever liberty ye may take for ought that men can say or do to you, let that be a sufficient restraint. Thus may ye attain experimental religion.

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THE RIGHT IMPROVEMENT OF A TIME OF SICKNESS AND MORTALITY.

Two sermons preached on a congregational fast-day, at Ettrick, April 27, 1720, on occasion of the great sickness and mortality then prevailing.

PSAL. xc. 12.—*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

THE SERMON IN THE FORENOON.

**T**HIS text is a prayer suitable to the dispensation of this day. While we stand and see so much sickness and mortality prevailing among us, they have stout hearts indeed, who look not up to the Lord with this or the like petition in their hearts, *So teach us, &c.*

This psalm was calculated for a dying time, being supposed to be penned upon the occasion of that sentence passed in the wilderness, Num. xiv. 28, &c. concerning the death of those from twenty years old and upward who came out of the land of Egypt, so as none of them should enter Canaan, but Caleb and Joshua. It was penned, I say, by Moses, who

saw, in the space of forty years, six hundred thousand men swept off by death, besides women and children.

There are three things insisted on in the body of this psalm, and summed up together, ver. 10, 11. A short life, a sure death, and a severe judgment. And here is the use of them, O to consider these so as to be wise for our souls, O for a sanctified use of the sad dispensation. In the words there is,

1. A lesson desired to be learned, (1.) The lesson itself, of *counting or numbering of our days*; i. e. of considering them duly and seriously, as he who tells any thing before him, looks to every one of the number, and makes a just reckoning. (2.) The teacher of whom only we can learn this is God himself. It is a difficult lesson to learn to purpose. Many good counters, who can dextrously count great sums, are quite out in the calculation of their days, Luke xii. 19, 20. There is a necessity of the teaching of the Spirit, in order to learn this divine arithmetic.

2. The standard of proficiency in this lesson, *That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*; i. e. that we learn it so, as we apply ourselves to serious godliness, which is the only wisdom; Heb. *that we may bring in; a heart of wisdom*, i. e. a wise heart. We have naturally light and foolish hearts; but he, and only he, learns this lesson well, that brings in a serious, religious, and wise heart, from the school of the word and providence, where that lesson is taught. All under this standard are but bunglers at the lesson, they have not yet learned it truly: though they can talk of it, viz. the shortness and vanity of life, they are never a whit the wiser for all that, in respect of their souls; they have not yet got it by heart, but only by head; and therefore they are still the carnal, careless men they were before.

The words being thus explained, I shall, as the subject of this forenoon's discourse, observe the following doctrine.

Doct. 'A time of mortality is a special call to all rightly to number their days.'

Sin brought in mortality into the world, Gen. ii. 17. compare chap. v. And it has never gone out of it since; at all times some are here and there stepping off: but there are some times by way of eminency to be called 'times of mor-

talities,' as that in the wilderness, and as now amongst us in this land. This has a special call.

Here I shall shew,

I. What it is to number our days.

II. That a time of mortality is a special call to this work.

I. I am to shew what it is to number our days. It imports,

1. Our days had a beginning, and we must reflect on that, Psal. xxii. 9. Every thing that is numbered must have a beginning; and therefore God's duration is not liable to numbering. But we may soon perceive our beginning to be in the world; and thence learn and observe,

(1.) That it is by divine appointment, and not by necessity of our nature, that we continue to be. The latter is proper to God only; by the former, angels and men, and all creatures, are continued in being. For he that once had no being, can never claim a natural necessity of continuing to be.

(2.) That every moment of our life hangs on the divine will and pleasure, Rev. iv. ult. There is no necessary connection betwixt your living this moment and living the next. The only bond betwixt them is God's word of appointment, Heb. i. 3. Loose that, and remove it, our life goes, and our eyes shall never see the next moment. No food, no physic, can prevent it, Matth. iv. 4. There is no outliving that word, Psal. xc. 3. 'Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return; ye children of men,' so much as for one moment.

(3.) That we must go the way of all flesh; for many of those we found in the world at our coming into it, are now gone, Zech. i. 5. This world is always like a fair near the height, where some are coming in, others going out, and those within in confusion, Eccl. i. 4. I doubt not but there may be some in this house this day, who, if they will consider, shall not find one of all those that filled it at their first coming into it this day. But these are gone, and others have come into the room of them all. And shall not others reckon so of us in a little time?

2. Our days will have an end, and we must seriously consider that. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. xxxix. 4. 'Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is. Every thing that is numerable has an end; and therefore eternity cannot be numbered, since it hath no end.



But we may soon come to the end of our count, when we are counting our days; and thence may learn and observe,

(1.) That the shored tree will be cut down at length. ‘I know that thou wilt bring me to death,’ says Job, ‘and to the house appointed for all living,’ Job xxx. 23. When we were first planted in this world, the axe was laid down at the root of the tree, and we have grown up beside it. There is never a pain nor stitch, but it is a stroke of that axe, a pledge of a greater. Sometimes it has almost struck through, but in a little time it will go through for altogether. So that man shall lie down, and not rise till the heavens be no more.

(2.) We will need nothing for this life ere long. Dip not so deep in the cares of this world as most do, to the ruin of their souls. Many have been anxious to provide for the day which they never saw, as the rich man in the parable did, Luke xii. 17,—20. The clods of earth will serve for back and belly ere long, and we will have no portion in what is done under the sun; others will possess the houses, lands, &c. which we now occupy.

(3.) See now how ye will begin eternity. It will begin with us when our days are come to an end; and as we begin it, so we will continue in it, Heb. ix. 27. Our state now is alterable, but then it is unalterable for ever. Therefore now or never let us secure a happy eternity. Learn your duty from the unjust steward, the serious consideration of which I recommend to you, Luke xvi. 3,—8.

(4.) Working time for eternity will not last. It closeth with the end of our days: Therefore ‘whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest,’ Eccl. ix. 10.

*Use.* Be not idle spectators of the dispensation of this day. Number your days, so as ye may apply your hearts unto wisdom. If you will not take warning to prepare for eternity, by the removal of others, take heed lest God make you a warning to others. Let the aged and young hear the voice of the rod, and seriously improve it.

3. Our days are few, and we must consider, that they are the number of a man, they may be counted. There are some things not innumerable in themselves, yet cannot be

numbered for their multitude. But there is no such multitude of the days of our life.

(1.) Consider the counters the scripture affords us to count our days by. A web, Isa. xxxviii; it is such a web as one is still working at without intermission, and therefore will soon be cut out:—grass, and a flower soon withered, Isa. xl. 6, 7;—green at morn, and cut down at night, Psal. xc. 6:—a vapour that vanisheth away, frail, uncertain, and of short continuance, Jam. iv. 14:—smoke, Psal. cii. 3:—a wind, a blast, or puff, Job vii. 7:—a sleep, Psal. xc. 5:—a dream, Job. xx. 8:—a hand-breadth, Psal. xxxix. 5:—nothing, *ibid.* compare Eccl. iii. 2. Count with these counters, and the reckoning will be very small, which the scripture also has cast up to our hands.

(2.) Consider the scripture-reckoning of man's life. The highest reckoning is by years, now brought down to a few scores, Psal. xc. 10. Nay, as we count the age of infants by months, so is man's age reckoned, Job. xiv. 5. As if months were too big a word, it is brought down to days, and a few days, Job. xiv. 1; yea, to one day, wherein there is but a morning, noon, and evening, Job xiv. 6; and yet lower, to an hour, 1 John ii. 18; aye, to a moment, that is past ere one is aware, 2 Cor. xv. 17. Prov. xii. 19. So the sum of our days is very small.

From both ye may find that our days are few; and thence learn and observe,

(1.) It is no safe counting to count many years in to come, whatever ye be, lest ye be out in your account, as the rich man was, Luke xii. 19, 20. Many whose youth and strength seemed to give them ground for counting so, have been forced to see their mistake, and count again, little to their comfort, death coming ere it was looked for.

(2.) Our days will soon be at an end. We will quickly be over our hand-breadth. They fly like a shadow, Job xiv. 2. And though a weaver's shuttle is very swift, in going from the one side of the web to the other, our days are swifter than it is, Job vii. 6. See what Job says, chap. ix. 25, 26. 'Now my days are swifter than a post; they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.'

(3.) We have no time to be idle. Our work for eternity is great, for it is long, and our time is short. They who

have much work, little time to do it in, little strength to do it with, and much opposition to wrestle against, had need to lose no time, John ix. 4. The shadows of the evening are stretched out; we have made but little way; let us therefore mend our pace.

(4.) *Lastly*, We must make a serious business of the considering of our days. The counting of them to purpose will not do otherwise. It deserves it, for eternity lies upon it; a mistake in that may be fatal; and we are very ready to miscount our days. And,

[1.] Make it a work by itself. If one have but a few threads to count, they will let other work alone till that be done; for it is of that nature that it will not mix with other pieces of work. Surely at any time, and much more at this time, God calls us to take some particular time for this work, Hag. i. 5.

[2.] Hold to it, till you have done it to purpose. Counting is not a work to be done by fits and starts. If it be broken off, readily all that is counted is lost, and one must just begin again, having lost his count. Fleeting thoughts of the shortness and uncertainty of time are to little purpose. The impression they make is soon worn off.

[3.] Dip into the business, and be not overly in it. One that is counting will be loath to hear or answer a word spoken to him, lest he miss his count. Satan and our ill hearts are apt to cast in diversions to those employed in counting their days; and by that means many times mar the work. But ye must stop your ears, and mind your business.

II. I proceed to shew, that a time of mortality is a special call to this work.

1. It sets death and eternity in a particular manner before the eyes of mortals, as appears from this psalm wherein our text lies. It is a looking-glass wherein every one may see his own frailty; for the strength of the hale is no more the strength of stones, nor their bones brass, more than others whom death has cut down. What is the lot of one mortal to-day, may be the lot of another to-morrow; and that calls to consider it.

2. God, by laying his hand on some, speaks unto others, as appears from what our Lord says, Luke xiii. 1. and downwards, and warns them. And they that are wise will take



warning, Micah vi. 9. And it is a sad evidence when people will not hear it. They look like those marked for destruction, who, in the face of God's judgments going abroad in a place still do wickedly, Isa. xxvi. 11.

3. It is an evidence of the Lord's anger against a land or country-side where it prevails, Amos iii. 8. And not laying it to heart is a contempt of God, that he will surely avenge, Psal. xxviii. 5. It speaks God to be risen up from his place to punish; and who knows who may fall ere God's sword, once drawn, be returned into its sheath?

*Use.* Let old and young comply with the call of God by the present sickness and mortality: let every one be stirred up thereby so to count their days, as they may apply their hearts unto wisdom. For motives, consider,

1. We will be most inexcusable, if after all these warnings death find us unprovided. The dispensation of the day is such, that no body needs to pretend to be surprised with death's coming to their own door, since it is carrying off so many, both young and old.

2. It is a piece of that duty we owe to an angry God, as we would not inflame his anger more against us, Psal. xxviii. 5. Amos iii. 8. It is not true courage, but stupidity and obstinacy, not to be deeply affected with the hand of God gone out against us. Let creatures despise, if they will, the stroke of their fellow worms, but let them not despise the stroke of God, Heb xii. 5. It becomes saints of the highest pitch to fear God smiting, Luke xii. 4, 5.

3. This would be the way to get the stroke removed, or at least to get it sanctified, Hab. iii. 16. The design of Providence in the stroke is to stir us up to this duty, and the answering of the call of the rod bids fairest for the removal of it, Lev. xxvi. 41, 42. If not, the venom will be taken out of it; and if one be taken away being fitted for it, he will exchange this life for a better.

4. *Lastly*, If this be misimproved, it lays us open to a worse, Amos iv. 11, 12. In a land so full of sin, so often threatened with desolating strokes, and so often delivered, but nothing bettered by deliverances, this stroke looks rather like the beginning than the end of sorrows, rather like an earnest than the round sum, that might clear the accounts betwixt God and a sinful nation.

## THE SERMON IN THE AFTERNOON.

WE are again met this day to humble ourselves under the hand of God, gone out against the congregation and country-side, in great sickness and mortality, and to deprecate the Lord's anger. I know no such expedient in our case, nor any thing that will bid so fair for the removal of the stroke, as our coming up to the standard of proficiency in the lesson in our text, which falls now to be spoken of, and which I shall cast into this doctrine.

DOCT. 'The right and necessary improvement of a time of bodily sickness and mortality, is to become wise for our souls.'

The Lord is putting particular persons and families among us yea, all of us, to the school of affliction, since the hand of God gone out against some concerns all; and it is necessary we learn our lesson aright, and become wise thereby.

In discoursing, from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what is that *wisdom* we must learn thereby.

II. Condescend on some particular pieces of *wisdom* which such a time calls us to apply our hearts to.

I. I am to shew, what is that *wisdom* we are to learn by a time of bodily sickness and mortality. It is serious godliness, or true religion. When one becomes seriously godly leaving the way of sin, and entering on the way of faith and holiness, than he has learned the lesson that God is teaching us this day, Job xxviii. ult. 'Unto man he said, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding.' This is the only true wisdom; and they continue arrant fools who do not arrive at it, whatever other wisdom they be masters of. This is the wisdom taught at God's school of affliction, Heb. xii. 10. The voice of the rod is, Be wise for your souls. That this is the true wisdom, appears in that,

1. It is practical wisdom, wisdom for regulating a man's life in the way to happiness, Hos. xiv. ult. How many are

there accounted wise, who betray their folly in quite shooting by the mark, in the way of life they chuse, Jer. xxii. 13,—16. Surely that is wisdom which sets men in the true way to happiness, which is faith and holiness, Mark xvi. 16. Heb. xii. 14. What avail carnal worldly wit, the profound speculations of natural men in the learned sciences, and the dry and sapless notions of religion in formal professors? All these are but laborious trifling, and making of a noise, doing nothing, while they never make them better men, though more knowing.

2. It is wisdom for one's self, Prov. ix. 12. There is a set of men, whose wisdom is noted to be for others, but not for themselves, resembled by boatmen, who ferry others over, but, during the whole time of their rowing, have their eyes fixed on the place whence they came, and, immediately after landing their passengers, return to where they set out. Such is the wisdom of all ungodly men: their wisdom may profit other men's souls or bodies; but, alas! it profits not themselves, 1 Cor. ix. ult. Matth. vi. 19, 20. But this is the excellency of real godliness, that 'it giveth life to them that have it,' Eccl. vii. 12. It casts the soul into the mould of truth, sanctifies the heart and life in conformity to the divine nature and will; and so perfects human nature, raising up a glorious fabric out of the ruins in which it was laid by the fall.

3. It is wisdom for one's latter end, Deut. xxxii. 29. The fool in the gospel had wit enough to provide for many years life. But here lay his folly, he had nothing provided for his latter end, for a dying hour, Luke xii. 20. Many such fools are among us. It was one of the dying expressions of a learned man of the last age (Grotius), *Ah! vitam perdidit, operose nihil agendo.*

4. It is wisdom for the better part, Luke x. 41, 42. The wisdom of the world is but for the baser part of man, the body; it makes him useful in business and civil conversation. But this reaches only the outworks, while in the mean time the soul's concerns lie by neglected. But this wisdom advanceth the life and interests of the soul, insures one's title to heaven, and sets him on the way to eternal happiness, Prov. viii. 35.

5. Lastly, It is wisdom for the better world, Heb. xi. 14, 16. Our projects for this world, as to ourselves, must die



with ourselves, Psal. cxlvi. 4. but they who are wise for that better world, by being religious indeed, will find their measures wisely laid in time, to take and have their effect happily in eternity, Rev. xiv. 13. What they now sow, they shall then joyfully reap.

III. I proceed to condescend on some particular pieces of wisdom which such a time calls us to apply our hearts to.

1. To inquire seriously into the causes of the Lord's controversy with us, Job x. 2. When God's hand is stretched out, it will be our wisdom to search wherefore it is so, Lam. iii. 39. Surely there is a cause; he does not smite without good reason: and unless our eyes see it, our hearts cannot rue it.

God has a controversy with the congregation and country-side; it were good we could lay it to heart. Two things seem to have the main hand in it.

(1). Abuse and misimprovement of spiritual mercies and privileges. Thus the Lord threatened the Old-Testament church, Deut. xxviii. 58, 59. 'If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law, that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, **THE LORD THY GOD**; then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.' This brought a sore sickness upon the church of Corinth, 1 Cor. xi. 30. The noted divisions, and deserting of ordinances, in the country, are the judgment and the sin of the corner, whereby contempt is poured on precious gospel-ordinances, the success of the gospel marred by so many hinderances laid in the way of souls getting good of it; and thus gnats are strained at, and camels swallowed down, in respect of the deep-died guilt in what it does to hinder the spiritual good of perishing souls. Men will not see it, but they shall see. And alas! how evident is our unfruitfulness under means of grace? How few are bettered now by a preached gospel? God's word is slighted, and ineffectual for our reformation, his holy name is profaned, his Sabbaths are violated, sacraments are neglected by some, and profaned by others with their unholy and untender lives. What wonder that for this cause 'many are weak and sickly among us, and many sleep?' 1 Cor. xi. 30. Warnings and reproofs

prevail not, conviction is rare, and conversion is more rare. Many have not a form of godliness left them; and few have any thing but a form of it. Many are crying out against the sins of others, while the visible blots in their own lives do not make them smite on their own breasts and say ‘What have I done!’ God grant that the contempt and abuse of gospel-privileges bring not a removal of the kingdom of God from us.

(3.) Abuse and misimprovement of temporal mercies. It is observable, that with the promise of plenty to the church, using their plenty in a holy becoming manner, the promise of the taking away of sickness is joined, *Exod. xxiii. 25. Deut. vii. 12,—14.* This says that God punisheth abuse of plenty with sickness. God has given the country plenteous years; and what has been the issue of it, but contempt of God and the rules of righteousness, increase of pride and vanity, and drunkenness, with an unordinary abuse of that fiery liquor, never ordained for ordinary drinking; masters breaking the yoke, undermining and undoing one another through the country; servants bursting all bonds, and turned quite unmanageable and undutiful? The last year, a little before this time, I gave warning from the Lord’s word against these things particularly\*: but I think there was never more of them, in my time, than followed upon the back of it. No wonder then, that God has shapen us out another piece of work this year.

Let these things be weighed in an even balance, as in the sight of God, by us all. And let particular persons and families, especially those who have been or are under the rod, inquire into the causes of God’s quarrel with them, that they may see why the Lord contendeth.

2. To be humbled under the causes of the Lord’s anger, and to turn to a smiting God in Christ. This would be our wisdom, *Lev. xxvi. 41, 42, Micah. vi. 9.* It is not time to stand in the way of sinners, when God is risen up to plead; it is high time to fall down before him in humiliation, and to fall off from God-provoking courses by reformation. Hear the voice of the rod. It is crying two things loudly this day.

\* In a discourse preached March 19, 1719, from *Josh. ix. 14.* which is printed in a collection of ten sermons of the author’s published in 1772 It is the ninth in that collection, and deserves a serious perusal.

(1.) Improve a season of the gospel. Some sermons have of late been the last to them that heard them. Some heard the sermon on the Lord's day in health, that were in eternity ere the next Sabbath. This says, Hear ye every day as if it were to be your last.

(2.) Improve temporal mercies, lest God be provoked to take them from you. Health and strength, and other temporal conveniences, are to be wisely managed, for ye see we have no tack of them, Eccl. ix. 10.

3. To be upon your guard, and manage sickerly for eternity, while you live. Remember the parable of the wise and foolish builder, and how apt ye are to play the fool in these matters, while health and strength lasts.

(1.) Beware ye be not cheated out of your most valuable interests, by a deceitful heart, a treacherous world, and a wily devil. Satan goes about many a poor simple one, till they are tricked of their souls, their part of Christ and heaven, and all the happiness of another world, Matth. xvi. 26. And wherefore do they part with them, but for the gratifying of a lust, which is a practice more foolish than if one should part with an estate for a childish toy. So did Esau. Wherefore be wise in time.

(2.) Beware the best bargain slip not through your fingers, while ye are pursuing vanities, Prov. xvii. 16. Alas! there are not a few, who, being busied with vanities of this world, which pass away with the using, miss the opportunity of making the treasure hid in the field of the gospel their own. Therefore be wise.

(3.) Beware of feeding yourselves with dreams and fancies, wherein there is no reality. There are many foolish virgins with lamps without oil, and foolish builders on the sand, There are many whose life is but one continued dream, wherein they judge aright of nothing, neither God, heaven, hell, or the world. So that their awakening cannot be but terrible. But be ye wise,

4. To prepare timeously for death and judgment, Matth. xxiv. 44. It is certain that naturally we are quite out of case for that great change: and, alas! we are naturally unwilling to think of it, or provide for it. But necessity has no law, We must die; and we must either be provided for death, or we are ruined: and if we be not timely provided, our candle may be put out ere our work be done.



(1.) Get habitual preparation for death, in a gracious state, Rom. viii. 1. Be sure to get out of the state of nature into the state of grace. And then come death when it will, it will but transport you into the state of glory. And there are two things here to be secured.

[1.] Get your title to heaven fixed. None will get thither but those who have a right to it, Mat. xxv. 34. 2 Cor. v. 1. To others the door will be cast in their face. But, ye may say, how may we get a title to heaven? *Ans.* Marry the Heir, and heaven shall be your dowry. The everlasting covenant is offered to you in the gospel, God to be your God in Christ, and Christ to be yours in all his offices. Therefore make a solemn deliberate transaction with God this night, embracing Christ in the covenant, and consenting to it, with an eye to death and eternity.

[2.] Get a fitness for heaven wrought in you, Col. i. 12. For ye cannot be meet for it, till your nature be changed. How may we get that fitness? may ye say. *Ans.* Believe and embrace Jesus Christ, for his spirit of sanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30. There is a fulness of the Spirit in him to be communicated, and faith must eye Christ for his sanctifying Spirit. Put off the old man, and put on the new man: be new creatures, and let old things pass away, and all things become new. In vain do men pretend to faith without this, 2 Cor. v. 17. and in vain will men look for heaven without it, John iii. 3.

This is habitual preparation, which whoso have, if they should be struck dead in a moment, or immediately seized with deliriousness, and die raving, yet they are safe; for 'there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,' Rom. viii. 1.

(2.) Get actual preparation for death, in a gracious frame for dying, that ye may die comfortably.

[1.] Make speed with your generation-work. Whatever piece of work is put in your hand, for God's honour, dispatch it with all expedition, Matth. xxiv. 46. for if ye delay it, ye may loose the opportunity for ever.

[2.] Be habitually tender in your life, Acts xxiv. 16. And beware of any standing controversy betwixt God and you; for if there be any such, it will readily stare you in a dying hour.

[3.] Be weaned from the world, and hold a loose grip of all you have in it, that it may drop like Joseph's mantle.

(4.) Keep waking and watchful, Luke xii. 36. Be much in the thoughts of death, and the life to come, that ye be not surprised\*.

[5.] *Lastly*, To prepare for more public and general trials and calamities. This is a piece of wisdom to be learned from such a dispensation. For lesser strokes are usually the fore-runners of greater ones. Sodom and Gomorrah were tried with a lesser stroke, ere they were destroyed by fire from heaven, Gen. xiv. 10. And our Lord told the Jews, that unless they repented, they should perish, Luke xiii. 5.; which threatening was accomplished in the destruction of Jerusalem. The day may yet come, wherein men shall praise the dead, that are already dead; and they may miss this stroke, who are reserved for a worse, and shall meet with it ere all be done. In a time when the cup of God's anger is going through a land, they that drink first usually fare best. How are we to prepare? may ye say. *Ans.* Keep your garments clean from the sins and snares of the day, and place where ye live, and take up your lodging in the sure and unalterable covenant of grace, and then no evil shall befall you.



#### TWO FORMS OF PERSONAL COVENANTING BY THE AUTHOR.

[As Mr BOSTON, has in his writings accurately explained the nature, and warmly inculcated the duty and necessity, of personal covenanting, or explicit entering into, or renewing covenant with God, by taking hold of God's covenant of grace; it will not be improper to subjoin the two following specimens of that solemn transaction in his own practice: the first, dated August 14, 1699, a little before his ordination to the ministry; the other, dated December 2, 1729, about two years and five months before his death. Both are printed from the original copies.]

**I** Mr THOMAS BOSTON, preacher of the gospel of Christ, being by nature an apostate from God, an enemy to the great JEHOVAH, and so an heir of hell and wrath, in myself

\* See these directions amplified and illustrated in the Fourfold State, state 4. head 2. title, Directions how to prepare for Death.

utterly lost and undone, because of my original and actual sins, and misery thereby ; and being, in some measure, made sensible of this my lost and undone state, and sensible of my need, my absolute need of a Saviour, without whom I must perish eternally ; and believing that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the eternal God, is not only able to save me, by virtue of his death and sufferings, but willing also to save me (though most vile and ugly, and one who has given him many repulses), both from my sins, and from the load of wrath due to me for them, upon condition that I believe, come to him for salvation, and cordially receive him in all his offices ; consenting to the terms of the covenant: Therefore, as I have at several opportunities before given an express and solemn consent to the terms of the covenant, and have entered into a personal covenant with Christ ; so now, being called to undertake the great and weighty work of the ministry of the gospel, for which I am altogether insufficient, I do by this declare, That I stand to and own all my former engagements, whether sacramental, or any other way whatsoever ; and now again do RENEW my covenant with God ; and hereby, at this present time, do solemnly COVENANT and ENGAGE to be the Lord's and MAKE a solemn resignation and upgiving of myself, my soul, body, spiritual and temporal concerns, unto the Lord Jesus Christ, without any reservation whatsoever ; and do hereby give my voluntary consent to the terms of the covenant laid down in the holy scriptures, the word of truth ; and with my heart and soul I TAKE and RECEIVE Christ in all his offices, as my PROPHET to teach me, resolving and engaging in his strength to follow, that is, to endeavour to follow, his instructions: I TAKE him as my PRIEST, to be saved by his death and merits alone ; and renouncing my own righteousness as filthy rags and menstruous cloths, I am content to be clothed with his righteousness alone ; and live entirely upon free grace ; likewise I TAKE him for my ADVOCATE and INTERCESSOR with the Father : And, finally, I TAKE him as my KING, to reign in me, and to rule over me, renouncing all other lords, whether sin or self, and in particular my predominant idol ; and in the strength of the Lord, do resolve and hereby engage, to cleave to Christ as my Sovereign Lord and King, in death and in life, in prosperity and in adversity, even for ever, and to strive and wrestle in his strength against all known sin ; *protesting,*



that whatever sin may be lying hid in my heart out of my view, I disown it, and abhor it, and shall in the Lord's strength, endeavour the mortification of it, when the Lord shall be pleased to let me see it. And this solemn covenant I make as in the presence of the ever-living, heart-searching God, and subscribe it with my hand, in my chamber, at Dunse, about one o'clock in the afternoon, the fourteenth day of August, One thousand six hundred and ninety-nine years.

T. BOSTON.

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A SECOND PERSONAL COVENANT.

**O** LORD, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I confess from my heart, that I am by nature a lost and undone sinner, wholly corrupted, and laid under the curse, in Adam, through the breach of the covenant of works; and have ruined myself more and more by my innumerable actual transactions, whereby my whole life appears in mine eyes this day a heap of vanity, sin, and foolishness. I am fully convinced, and do from my heart acknowledge, that I am utterly unable to help myself, in whole or in part, out of this gulf of sin and misery, into which I am plunged; and that it is beyond the reach of the whole creation to help me out of it; so that I must inevitably perish for ever, if thine own strong hand do not make help to me. But forasmuch as there is a covenant of grace, for life and salvation to lost sinners, established between THEE and thine own SON, the Lord Jesus Christ, as second Adam; wherein, upon condition of his fulfilling all righteousness, which is now performed, in his having been born perfectly holy, lived altogether righteously, and made perfect satisfaction to justice by his death and sufferings, thou hast promised that thou wilt be their God, and they shall be thy people, to the making of them holy and happy for ever; and that this covenant is, in Christ the head thereof, offered and exhibited to me in thy gospel, and thou callest me into the fellowship thereof, in

him : Therefore (adhering to my former acceptings, and taking hold of it, declared whether by word or writ before thee, without wilful mistaking of it, or known guile), upon the warrant of, and in obedience to, thy command and call, I, in myself a poor perishing sinner, and worthy to perish, do now again TAKE HOLD of that COVENANT; for life and salvation to ME ; believing on the name of Christ crucified the head thereof, offered and exhibited to me, as the great High Priest, who, by the sacrifice of himself, hath made atonement, paid the ransom, and brought in everlasting righteousness for poor sinners. I CREDIT his word of grace to me, and accordingly TRUST on him, that he with his righteousness will be mine, and that, in and through him, God will be my God, and I shall be one of his people, to the making of me holy and happy for ever. O my God, I do by thy grace acquiesce in that covenant, as all my salvation, and all my desire. With my whole heart and soul, the SON incarnate is my only PRIEST, my Surety, my Intercessor, and my Redeemer ; and, in him, the FATHER my FATHER, the HOLY GHOST my SANCTIFIER ; GOD in CHRIST my God. I resign myself, soul and body, to him, to be saved by his blood alone ; renouncing all confidence in mine own righteousness, doings, and sufferings. With my whole heart and soul he is my HEAD and HUSBAND : and I am his only, wholly, and for ever ; to live by him, to him, and for him. I take him for my alone PROPHECY, Oracle, and Guide ; give up myself wholly to him, to be taught, guided, and directed, in all things, by his word and Spirit ; and renounce mine own wisdom, and the wisdom of this world. He is, with my heart's consent, my alone KING and Lord. And I resign myself wholly, soul and body, unto him, to be rescued, by the strength of his mighty hand, from sin, death, the devil, and this present evil world, for to serve him for ever, and to be ruled by the will of his command as to my duty, and the will of his providence as to my lot. I am, with my whole heart, content (Lord, thou knowest) to part with, and do renounce, every known sin, lust, or idol, and particularly that sin which most easily besets me ; together with my own foolish will, and other lords besides him ; without reservation, and without exception against his cross : *Protesting* in thy sight, O Lord, that I am, through grace, willing to have discovered unto me, and upon discovery to part with, every

sin in me that I know not: and that the doubtings and averseness of heart, mixed with this my accepting of thy covenant, are what I allow not; and that, notwithstanding thereof, I look to be accepted of thee herein, in the Beloved, thine only Son and my Saviour, purging away these, with all my other sins, by his precious blood. Let it be recorded in heaven, O Lord, and let the bed on which I leaned, the timber, and the stones, and all other things about me here, in my closet, bear witness, That I, though most unworthy, have this second day of December, One thousand seven hundred and twenty-nine years, here taken hold of, and come into thy covenant of grace, offered and exhibited to me in thy gospel, for time and eternity; and that thou art my God in the tenor of that covenant, and I am one of thy people, from henceforth and for ever.

T. BOSTON.











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